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Life in Communist China



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Life in Communist China

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ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

Life in Communist China

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Introduction

In 1949 mainland China was taken over by the People's Liberation Army of the Chinese Communist Party. The Communists, under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, then formed the People's Republic of China. The Kuomintang (Nationalist) government fled to the island of Formosa, where it established a regime with American assistance. Since 1949 there have been "two Chinas," neither of which is well known to most Americans.

The readings in this book view the relationship of the individual to his government in a totalitarian regime. How does the Chinese Communist Party affect the daily lives of the people in China? In what ways may the quality of life have improved for the Chinese in the last twenty years?

There is not one right answer to the question of life in Communist China. It is important that you gather all the evidence you can about China and evaluate it carefully as you draw tentative conclusions. It is also very important to evaluate the source of the evidence you gather. The book's emphasis on eye-witness accounts led to the use of sources from many countries, since very few Americans have had the opportunity to visit China in recent years. In addition to American and Chinese authors, Austrian, Australian, Canadian, French, and Swedish authors are represented. This raises

the very important question of whose accounts one should believe. An Australian writer reported her visits with a prominent national capitalist in Shanghai and indicated that capitalists were well treated and allowed to live in comparative luxury,¹ while an escaped national capitalist wrote about such visits and described the elaborate efforts made by party officials to stage them for propaganda purposes.²

The press in China is avowedly committed to proclaiming the "truth" of Communist doctrine rather than to the "objective" reporting of events, and many Chinese see this as enlisting the press in the cause of truth rather than as suppressing the freedom of the press. It renders the Chinese press a highly biased source from the Western point of view nevertheless. The Western visitor who photographs or records notes about the darker aspects of life in China is quite naturally suspected by the Chinese of trying to put China in a bad light. "When so much is new and progressive, why notice the bad?" they ask. Interviews with refugees from China provide much information about China, but we know that their point of view is not typical. The two refugees who reported that life in China was intolerable may have

1. Myra Roper, *China, The Surprising Country* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966).

2. Robert Loh as told to Humphrey Evans, *Escape from Red China* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1962).

found it so because they belonged to classes strictly censured by the Communists: one was a former landowner and the other the son of another former landowner.³ Therefore, it is important to consider the frame of reference and possible motives of the author.

In the readings you will find information and draw inferences about the standard of living, working conditions, personal and family life, and the hopes and ambitions of the Chinese people. You will also form impressions about the means by which the Chinese Communist Party attempts to control its citizens: criticism, informing, confessions, and "struggle." The latter term refers to group meetings in which people engage in intense criticism of one another's shortcomings in the light of party expectations. Questions may arise about the extent to which it is legitimate for a government to attempt to shape the minds of its citizens. Is it legitimate, for example, to deprive people of freedom in order to gain enough efficiency in food production so that those people do not starve to death? Such questions should be examined in the light of evidence.

The study of these readings can be an exciting experience if you do all you can to answer your own questions about life in Communist China.

3. Danielle Hunebelle, "We Just Had to Get Out, Red China Had Become a Living Hell," *Réalités*, No. 155 (October, 1963).

Life in Rural China

Six out of every seven Chinese live in rural areas and most of these people devote their lives to food production. Crops and methods vary from place to place, but in no region has the machine substantially eased the burden of hand labor.

Liu Ling is one of fifty-nine small villages of the Willow Grove commune in the northwest of China. Since 1949 these rural farm communities called communes have developed in stages. Early land reform eliminated landlords and distributed the land among the peasants. In the second stage the government pressured peasants to relinquish their land for the formation of cooperatives. The government also forced rich peasants to contribute their tools and animals as well as their land. The cooperative included a single village or cluster of small villages; most peasants continued to work their own land.

Since 1958 large communes have been formed in an attempt to transform work organization. Each commune is divided into production brigades which are subdivided into production teams. Today, emphasis on the larger organization has lessened, and the brigade (village) and team (smaller group) are the more important units. In the mid 1960's private plots were restored to peasant families for stronger work incentive. Since then, production of vegetables and meat has increased beyond past levels.





Life in Liu Ling Village

This reading contains interviews with two peasants, a man and a woman, tape-recorded by Jan Myrdal, a Swedish journalist and the son of a prominent social scientist. Myrdal's wife sketched and photographed people and places throughout the year they spent in China. Together they have published a book about their journey and another one about Liu Ling village.

Tung Yang-chen, Leader of the Liu Ling Labor Brigade

My task now is being responsible for agricultural production within the labour group. It isn't an easy job. As labour leader one has to have patience. Some of the members are pleasant, others aren't. Some are apathetic and have to be persuaded to work. The work, of course, has to be uniform. As labour leader I have much more to do than when I was an ordinary worker member. I have to organize all the work, get the people out to the fields every day, see that the ploughing and weeding is done properly. In the afternoons I plan the next day's work. I do that while I am working. I think as I go along. Before the others go home for the day, I tell them what has to be done the next day. In that way, they all know what they are to do. Sometimes they have different ideas and suggest that the work be done in a dif-

ferent way; sometimes they think I'm wrong. If so, they point this out to me, but they don't protest against my instructions. After all, I was elected labour leader and it is I who bear the responsibility. Being labour leader is an honorary position of trust.

Most of the members are decent people. Not all, but most. They say: 'Of course, we'll manage to get that field ploughed.' That helps me. Any big questions are always discussed at our meetings. The difficult thing, where I am concerned, is that I can neither read nor write. I have taken part in literacy courses and I did learn a few characters, but I forget them again at once. It's not easy to learn anything once you're grown-up.

The days pass in work. If you look at how the last few days have been for me, you'll know what almost all our weeks are like. The only things that alter are the seasons and the jobs we do.

† Jan Myrdal, *Report from a Chinese Village* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1965).

Sunday, 26 August 1962

04.30 Alarm bell rings. My wife and I get up. I smoke a pipe of home-grown tobacco. We don't have anything to eat. I don't even have a glass of warm water in the morning. Then I go out and see that people get off to their work. Ten of them are to plough the wheatfields up on Loushan. Fifteen are to weed. I myself go with the ploughers.

08.00 The food-fetcher brings our breakfasts. This is our first meal of the day. One man in the team is detailed to collect all our breakfast dishes. He goes from household to household. We take it in turn to do this. The one who is doing it, of course, begins work later. He gets his work points¹ for fetching our food. It isn't so easy carrying breakfast dishes with food for ten people.

12.00 We stop our morning's work. We drive the oxen down. They are tired now and need rest. Then we ourselves go home to eat and rest. My wife has food ready. After eating, I sleep for half an hour.

14.00 In the afternoon the ploughers get up potatoes. The others go on weeding.

19.30 When work is over for the day we go home. I fetch four buckets of water from the well. Then I eat. Then we all go to bed.

Monday, 27 August 1962

04.30 Get up, smoke, ten for ploughing, fifteen for weeding.

08.00 Breakfast.

12.00 Bring oxen down, have dinner, half an hour's sleep.

14.00 All getting up potatoes.

19.20 Potatoes all up. Leader of the labour group, Li Hung-fu, returns from a meet-

ing of the committee of Liu Ling's labour brigade. We hold a labour group meeting in the fields.

Li Hung-fu reports on the committee meeting. We had had our labour group's committee meeting a couple of days earlier, on the 23rd I think. After a short discussion, we agree to the suggestions of the brigade committee. Then we divide up the potato harvest. It is a clear starry night and we don't have to fetch paraffin lamps. After this, everyone goes home taking his potatoes, has supper and goes straight to bed.

Wednesday, 29 August 1962

04.30 Get up, smoke, ten on ploughing, fifteen on weeding.

08.00 Breakfast.

12.00 Dinner, rest.

14.00 Everybody on weeding.

16.30 Rain, can't work, sit in lee of a mound and wait for it to clear. Rain does not stop, just gets harder.

17.00 Go home, work stops, raining too much. Stay in cave.² Sit on kang,³ resting.

19.30 Supper. Sleep.

Thursday, 30 August 1962

04.30 Get up, smoke, ten on ploughing, fifteen on weeding.

08.00 Breakfast.

12.00 Dinner, rest.

14.00 Everybody on weeding.

19.00 Home, fetch water, supper, sleep.

Friday, 31 August 1962

This is my free day this week. I can do what I like.

2. These caves are dug in the ground on a hillside and have plastered walls, a chimney, and sometimes several rooms. A vast majority of peasants live in this type of housing.

3. A masonry stove for sitting or sleeping upon.

1. The peasant's work is measured in work points. When the required quota has been exceeded, rewards are distributed as an incentive.

04.30 Get up, smoke, fetch four buckets of water, sweep the yard in front of the cave, go down and see to my private plot of land.

08.00 Home to the cave for breakfast.

09.00 Down to my private plot. Weeding, till it becomes too dark to work.

19.00 Home, have supper, sleep.

There are no mornings when we sleep in. We don't do that in this part of the country. In the busiest time, harvest-time, we don't take our days off. We save them up till later in the year. No, I don't normally go and visit our neighbours in the village. After all, I see them out in the fields every day, so I don't need to visit them in the evenings as well.

It's in the winter that we rest. We collect fuel then. Either sticks and dry wood that we find, or we hack up a little coal. We bought a bicycle in 1960, and we bought a two-wheeled cart with rubber tyres in 1961. I had been thinking of buying a bicycle for a long time. It is easier to get into the town if you have a bicycle. I ride the bicycle. My wife could not bicycle when we bought it. I have tried to teach her, but she still can't get on without help. I keep the bicycle up in the cave. I get it out when we want to go in to Yen'an, then I take her, if she's coming too.

I bicycle into Yen'an twice a month. Then I go to the opera. If there's a good opera in Yen'an, we stop work at half past five. Perhaps we decide that the whole team will go to the opera. We ride in on seven or eight bicycles, each of us taking a passenger. I usually ride in with the other chaps, but now and again I take my wife and the children. Mostly she does not

want to come. She wants to stay with our youngest. She won't take it to the opera. It's such a business. The older children like films best. None of us like song-and-dance. But when there's a film in the village, even Granny goes to it.

The years pass; they are all like one another. We begin with the spring ploughing and continue with it for a month. Then we sow millet, the kaoliang⁴ and maize. We plough for the two different kinds of 'sticky millet,' that takes ten days, then we sow. We turn the soil for buckwheat and sow buckwheat. Then we begin weeding the fields, and we keep on with that the whole time till we harvest, one field after the other, and then we begin again with the first field. We harvest the wheat and bring it down off the hillside. We begin threshing the wheat and ploughing up the wheatfields. We sow wheat and harvest buckwheat and then the two kinds of 'sticky millet,' millet, maize and beans. We bring our harvest down off the hillside. We use carrying-poles to carry it. We thresh, and finish threshing towards the end of the year. Then in January we have winter and then we rest and gather fuel and that sort of thing, unless there's some water-regulating work or something else on the go, and after that we begin the year with ploughing again.

In October we begin preparing the production plan for the next year. That's about all. Now and again we help on water regulation. Harder some years, not so hard others. During the winter twenty men are on repairing and maintaining the terraces we built before. We aren't making anything new this year; and we didn't make anything new last year either. We

4. A cereal grass.

are just trying to keep it all in good order.

Life goes on. I have four children now. One girl goes to school; she's ten. I have a boy who's eight and a girl who is a hundred days. I also have a daughter of twelve; she went to school for one year, but the teachers sent her home. They said she was too stupid to go to school. That's all.

Li Yang-ching, Liu Ling Housewife

I am married to Liu Chen-yung. Li Hsiu-tang is my uncle, he is my father's younger cousin. My mother is dead, my father is dead, my mother-in-law is dead. My father-in-law is dead. I look after the house and work in the fields when I have time. We have three children. My sister-in-law, old Mrs. Li, looks after them when I am working. My oldest daughter is ten and goes to school.

I work in the fields, when it is possible for me to do so. I have to look after the cave, too, of course. My year is roughly like this, going by the moon calendar. I don't know the sun calendar.

January, February.

I make clothes and shoes for the family.

March, April.

I work in the fields, turning the earth in places they can't get at to plough with the oxen, and preparing the manure for spreading.

May, June.

I weed the fields, beans, wheat, millet, potatoes.

July, August.

We weed a second time, then we begin cutting the wheat.

September, October.

We take up the potatoes, harvest the beans and jute, and plough the fields for wheat, manure them and sow the wheat. We have brought the harvest down from the fields up on the hillside to the threshing floor and we thresh it. Towards the end of October, the threshing will be almost finished.

November, December.

There is less to do in the fields, and we women do not need to go out and work on the land. The men gather firewood and are busy with the manure. Then the year begins again.

We women who are working in the fields leave home around half past seven in the morning. We come home about twelve to prepare food for the family. Then we sleep for an hour. At about three o'clock, we go out again and get back home at seven or eight o'clock in the evening. My husband and I get up at the same time in the morning. That's before five o'clock. Then he goes to work at five, has breakfast out in the fields later; I get breakfast ready, clear away and do the cave, dress the children, feed the pig and see to the hen and her six chicks. After that, it is time for me to go to work. In the midday break, when I come home, I cook a meal, and, when I come home in the evening, the first thing is to feed the family; then I feed the pig, the hen and her six chicks, then I see to the children and when they're asleep, I do my sewing and make clothes and attend to such things, until about ten o'clock when I am tired and fall asleep.

In the busiest time in the summer, when the days are longer, we get up before four and my husband goes to work at four. We

then work on until it is so dark that we can't see to do any more. We have dinner in the middle of the day, but then we have it at the collective dining-hall so as not to lose time. But at such times I don't sit up at night making clothes. It isn't so hard; people have always done it.

In the dead season, we stay in bed a bit longer. We don't get up then till six o'clock, with the dawn. Then I make breakfast and my husband has it with us. After that I see to the animals and perhaps go down to the big donkey-driven collective mill to mill flour. That takes half a day and I do it now and then during the winter. Then I make quilted coats for the family, sew shoes and that sort of thing. At midday, my husband comes home and we eat. In the winter he does not need a midday rest after dinner. He has slept longer in the morning and it is cool outside. In the afternoons he works outdoors and I sit at home making shoes and clothes. He comes home at dusk and if there isn't anything special on, we go to bed immediately after supper.

He has one rest day a week. Being a woman, I have a little more. In the summer, we use these to work in our private plot. We grow maize and millet and 'sticky millet' of two kinds. We have both our own private plot of good land down in the village and the new land we cleared for ourselves last year. You are allowed to clear as much as you like up on the hill; it's just a question of what you can manage. Last year our private crops brought us in about 800 jin⁵ of grain. In the winter, he uses his rest day to cut wood or do other of the heavier household jobs.

We don't often go into Yen-an. Once a

5. One jin is equivalent to 1 lb. ½ oz.

month roughly, and then to shop and see the opera. I don't go regularly, but if a good, famous opera company comes, I'll go in more often, otherwise not so often. We never go together. I go in the daytime and he in the evenings. That's because of the children. When one's working and has children, one can never go out together in the evenings. I like the Shansi opera best. Sometimes films come to the village. Then I see them.

I go more often to Seven-mile Village. I go there every fortnight to buy salt and soya and that sort of thing. Every fortnight we in the family use roughly:

Salt (we salt down a lot)	2.5 jin
Soya	1.0 jin
Vinegar	1.0 jin
Cooking oil	1.0 jin
Biscuits	1.0 jin
Sugar	2.0 liang ⁶

That's the food we buy. The biscuits and sweet cakes are for the children. The whole thing usually costs about four or five yuan.⁷

We women usually sit together by day, so that we can chat. That makes the work go easier. Sometimes there are two or three of us, sometimes five or six. The more we are, the more fun it is. In summer we haven't time to see each other, but in the winter our work is of such a kind that we can sit together. We who meet to chat and sew are all of the same age. We haven't much to chatter about with the older women.

6. One liang is equivalent to 1 oz.

7. Chinese dollar.

Pride of Poor Men: Willow Grove Commune

Edgar Snow's description of the Willow Grove commune places life in Liu Ling in a broader setting. Snow was a personal friend of Mao Tse-tung years before the Communist government was established in China and is one of the few Americans to have visited that country in recent years. He is generally considered to be sympathetic to the people and to the government of China. Myrdal's interviews with the peasants which you just read and Snow's description of the commune will enable you to form a picture of a Chinese peasant's daily routine and to assess tentatively the effect of the commune on his life.

To give meaning to Willow Grove I must repeat that north Shensi in the nineteen thirties was so ravaged a land that it was always astonishing to find people living in its crevices at all. The soil seemed worn down, worn-out, the topography all against profitable farming: nine-tenths of it sloping and eroding, and the valleys so narrow that the good land there provided even landlords with no more than a poor living by our standards. Most of them were as illiterate as the peasants. This country was blighted worse than an Oklahoma dust bowl or the Texas badlands; there were very few trees, and it was arid except for swift summer floods and winter snows. Its best asset was a fine dry healthful climate. That alone probably explained why poor people could survive in their tumble-down

caves infested by flies and rats (bubonic plague used to be endemic) and scratch an existence from scabby patches of grain planted on slopes sometimes as steep as thirty degrees, from which they were lucky to bring in three or four bushels an acre.

We stood on the wide baked-clay terrace before Li's caves, overlooking a lower ledge where a man drove a herd of white goats down the hill to water. There was a view of a ravine on one side and on the other the green and gold of the valley, far down, where half a dozen of the fifty-nine villages of Willow Grove Commune were in sight—each consisting of old caves and two or three new one-story tile-roofed buildings. Several hundred sheep kicked up the dust of a new dirt and gravel highway. In the ravine a team of surveyors was

[†] Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1961).

laying out what would be a spur road to the new reservoir. Here a branch of the Yen-an River fed into irrigation ditches watering rice fields. *Rice?* Millet and corn were the hardy annuals here, and wheat and vegetables for the good land. Rice was a delicacy I had seldom tasted on my first visit.

"Yes, old farmers said we couldn't grow rice here when we planted it," said Li. "Never been done before. We got expert help. It will run to two hundred catties a *mou* (twelve bushels an acre) this year but we'll double that next year. Our brigade will have rice for everybody."

Now, across the valley, climbing right to the tree-planted hilltops, lay tier on tier of terraces, with pools and catch basins built to hoard water and soil drawn in by well-engineered drainage systems. Mixed grain and giant squash were the hill harvest, but several lengths of the vast staircase were covered with something new, flowering tobacco plants. An experimental crop, said Li.

"Erosion?" He itemized the landscape: "See that young pine grove over there? See those apricot trees; they're bearing for the second year. We have planted 47,000 *mou* in pines, nut trees and orchards. Erosion? It's basically (how they love that word!) solved here. Our commune has dry-terraced 6,000 *mou* and terraced another 4,000 in guaranteed irrigation."

Their total land area was 65,000 *mou* (about 11,000 acres); they must have covered everything but the ridges and peaks.

"How long does it take to terrace a *mou* of land?"

"About seventeen man-labor days. We could do it in two or three with small bulldozers. We don't even have a tractor

yet." With the hand labor of about 2,600 men and women members, Willow Grove had thus terraced 1,500 acres, a third of it since 1957.

We walked a mile through a ravine to see the No. 1 Dam, a well-built, deep-footed stone embankment about seventy feet high lying in the bed of a small tributary to a minor branch of the Yellow River.¹ Beyond the causeway placid blue waters joined towering cliffs and made a lake half a mile long.

"Maybe you don't know what it means to us to have dams and reservoirs," said one of Li's young team leaders, earnest and enthusiastic, who had joined us. "We've got another dam bigger than this and seven more almost as large. People in these hills never knew the blessings of a good year-round water supply even for bathing, not to say irrigation or power. They hardly knew what soap looked like. It used to be said that a Shensi man bathed only twice in his life, when he was born and when he was married—and that was an exaggeration. Now our children even learn to swim. Our reservoirs are stocked with 640,000 fish! What peasant around here ever ate fresh fish? There's a good life ahead for our children!"

As a "commune," Willow Grove was in population hardly larger than a big brigade. What are called villages here are mostly small groups of ten or twenty families living in a cluster of caves. Level land is too scarce to be used for villages; even cattle and poultry are quartered in hillside caves. Willow Grove had only 1,592 families; 640,000 fish meant 400 for each family. Fish every day and two on

1. The Yellow River is the second largest river in China and flows in the northern part of the country.

feast days? No. These were commune assets on which to build for the future, and were being consumed only sparingly. The meat and fish ration per member was given as two catties (2.2 pounds) per month, supplemented by such poultry, pigs and goats as each family could maintain on its small private plot. Like most communes, and especially poor communes, Willow Grove was selling much of its meat and saving the proceeds to buy things needed for future development.

Willow Grove already had one small power plant which lighted 120 buildings and supplied a telephone system that reached all its fifty-nine villages. (All the communes were now connected by telephone.) The brigades operated eleven small industries. I saw a slate and tile works, a transportation service (60 rubber-tired carts and 138 animals), a fertilizer plant, the largest brick kiln in Yen-an county, a carpentry shop and a blast furnace.



Since the establishment of the people's communes there have been marked improvements in irrigation techniques, the level of agricultural production, and the life of the Chinese peasants. However, the machinery and the fertilizing methods remain inadequate.

Life in Urban China

Over 100 million Chinese live in cities. This is equivalent to the population of Japan or half that of the United States, but it is a small proportion of China's 800 million people. China is not highly industrialized, and her people face the problem of creating economic opportunities to match population growth in the cities. A second challenge is to develop social institutions that can provide city-dwellers with a sense of community. In 1958 a plan, called the Great Leap Forward, was devised to meet both the economic and the social needs by the establishment of urban communes. Most of these communes have not persisted, and attempts have been made to deal with the problems in other ways; for instance, by encouraging a movement back to the land and by allowing "free" markets to provide financial incentive to producers. Although the People's Republic of China may not have greatly changed economic and social institutions since 1949, it has demonstrated startling success in reducing disease and crime and in improving sanitation and cleanliness.





What It Is Like to Live in Peking Today

In this excerpt, Geneviève Morel recounts her impressions of Peking after living there as a French student from 1965 to 1968. She gives a general description of the capital city and the life of the Chinese city-dweller. The Chinese are attempting to industrialize without large sources of capital, and although the process is slow, export goods at Chinese trade fairs include not only textiles and food products, but also machine tools, diesel generators, musical instruments, sporting goods, furniture, sewing machines, cosmetics, liquors, fishnets and medicines.

From a distance the city looks like some outsize military encampment with impeccable rows of tents. People go about muffled up in thick quilted jackets and hurry home as quickly as they can after work. In midwinter it is dark at five: by eight, everything is closed up and Peking is a dead city.

But in May the climate improves and the wind drops: doors open, and Peking does its spring cleaning. Suddenly there is greenery everywhere: there are large public parks, clean and well-kept, and each main avenue has several rows of trees. The streets come to life as the old people start walking out again with the children they have been left to look after (most women work, and there are not enough nurseries). The grandparents go to the parks and sit down and chat while the

children play. At that age, the children are delightful. Once they start going to school, something changes. Propaganda begins in the kindergarten: they are taught to play at being guerrillas and fighting “the wicked imperialists.” They become more serious and shy. As soon as they begin to read they enter a real political atmosphere. When the children’s newspaper talks of friendship with the Cuban people, the walls of the classroom are soon covered with pictures of Cuba and the children play at dressing up as Cubans. But after some time the fashion changes and it’s the Albanians’ turn—the Cubans are forgotten. The exuberance of the small children contrasts strangely with the reserve and apparent indifference of the people in the street. The Pekingese have a Northern temperament, and prefer

† Geneviève Morel, “What It’s Like to Live in Peking Today,” *Réalités*, No. 208 (March, 1968).

to be left alone. To teach a crowd of them to march in step for a demonstration takes hours of rehearsal.

One sees few young couples in the street. When a young man and a girl go out together they walk side by side, perhaps holding hands, stop to eat a bowl of noodles (Northern China is a country of wheat, not rice), drink a lemonade or go for a row on one of the lakes in the parks.

Love is treated with the strictest reserve. Traditional Chinese prudery has now been stiffened by the official policy of encouraging late marriage, and this official pressure is one of the most effective weapons at the government's disposal for fighting the population growth.

Housing is still a problem, in spite of the city authorities' efforts. Greater Peking has a population of about 7,000,000. Large new housing projects are going up, particularly in the outer suburbs and around the city fringe. Those lucky enough to find accommodation there are privileged: they have running hot water, district central heating, and large open spaces planted with trees. But even these new apartments are small and overcrowded. The furnishings are very simple: boards with blankets for beds, a storage chest in the corner, a low table, a few stools, a cupboard with a photograph of Chairman Mao on it, a radio set, and perhaps a few souvenirs, plastic flowers, and so on. The only washing facilities are in the kitchen. There is no television or telephone.

But the vast majority of the population still lives in the traditional single-storeyed houses that lie hidden out of sight behind walls. Off the main perpendicular streets and avenues run dark lanes, the *hut'ung*, lined on either side by grey mud walls.

Behind these walls beats Peking's true heart. Families—which are bigger than Western families, usually including several grandparents, aunts and uncles—live in a suite of rooms around a courtyard. Through one of these rooms you can get into the next courtyard with another suite of rooms, so the whole *hut'ung* area forms a community interlocking like a jigsaw puzzle. Many foreigners who have lived fifteen or twenty years in Peking have never penetrated behind these walls. The low buildings round the courtyards are built of wood and mud. Each room which faces on to the courtyard has a charcoal stove in front of the door with a kettle singing on it. The rooms have electricity, but no running water: water has to be fetched from the pump, where there is always a queue of housewives and children. In summer everyone eats [his] bowl of noodles squatting in front of [his] door.

In the centre of the old town is the Imperial City, enclosing the Old Imperial Palace (the Forbidden City), other palaces and several large parks. The palaces have been turned into museums, but since the start of the Cultural Revolution¹ they have been closed, no doubt to protect them from the modernizing fervour of the Red Guards.² The south side of the Imperial Palace overlooks T'ien-an Men, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, and T'ien-an Men Square, Peking's equivalent to Moscow's Red Square, where Mao Tse-tung hoisted the red flag on October 1st, 1949. This is where all the mass demonstrations take place; they follow a carefully pre-

1. The Cultural Revolution is a wide social reform movement that started in 1966.

2. A locally organized patriotic youth movement supported by Mao to campaign against those who do not follow him.

pared ceremonial, organizational problems being facilitated by numbers on the paving stones. On the other sides of the square, which is one of the largest in the world (it covers nearly 100 acres), there are a number of the immense Soviet-style buildings put up hastily during the Great Leap Forward of 1958-59: on the eastern side stands the Museum of the History of China and the Communist Revolution and, opposite, the National Assembly Building.

Apart from the new buildings Ch'ang-an Chieh, a broad avenue running east and west on either side of T'ien-an Men Gate, there has been little rebuilding in the old town. The authorities seem to have put all their effort into enlarging the residential, industrial and university zones on the edge of the city.

The university itself is excellently equipped, and its students have no reason to be jealous of their Soviet or American counterparts. The campus, situated near the Summer Palace, has plenty of open space and greenery—trees, lawns and pools surround all the faculty buildings. Up until the Cultural Revolution, more than 50 per cent of students were from former middle-class families. Better prepared than students of working-class origin, they did better at their studies, which had the effect of perpetuating class consciousness in university circles.

Peking students have always had a very high opinion of themselves, and used to be noted, even under the new regime, for a certain intellectual snobbery which showed in their affected behaviour and peculiarities of dress. The compulsory periods of manual work in the factories and on the farms which were introduced

after 1958 proved a terrible trial for many of them. They talked about them and prepared for them months in advance, and when the day came to leave, they dressed up in their newest clothes, put on little white gloves, and set off carrying their personal belongings in a plastic bag. The peasants watched them arrive with amusement and told them to their face that they were “of no use at all.”

In June, 1966, during the Cultural Revolution, all schools and universities were closed. They are now gradually being reopened again, but under a new system of education. University entrance will in future be made on the basis of selection and backed up by political recommendation.

The industrial suburbs of Peking are also being developed at a rapid rate. The city, which had virtually no industry before 1949, is now well on the way to becoming one of the major industrial centres of modern China. Just outside the city proper, at Shih Ching Shan, a whole steel complex has mushroomed from a primitive foundry. Today, products manufactured in or around Peking include consumer goods, chemicals, plastics, precision instruments, machine-tools and textiles.

There are probably some unemployed, but information is naturally difficult to come by. In theory the working day is eight hours, but there are no paid holidays and no days off. Wages are low: the lowest are around 40 to 50 yuan a month, roughly \$16 to \$20. Skilled workers may earn \$35 to \$40. But against these low incomes must be set off the benefits of free medical treatment and education, and the cheapness of food and housing.

What hits the Peking worker hardest

is the distance he has to go to work—on foot, by bus or, most commonly, by bicycle. Crossing Peking takes an age: the traffic, already sluggish, has been slowed down considerably since the Red Guards³ invaded the capital. During his long cycle ride home after work, he may begin to wonder about the lauded achievements of the Great Cultural Revolution when he is stopped on his way by Red Guards, perhaps only ten or twelve years old, who tell him off for having the portrait of Mao on his handlebars crooked, or for having made a mistake in copying out the Chairman's "thought" which decorates his mudguards!

Goods are transported by hand-cart and pedal-cart. The bus and trolleybus services are well organized. But taxis are few and far between. Cars are rare, being used only by associations, government departments, institutes and factories. Among the more lunatic "suggestions" of the Red Guard posters which covered the city's walls until recently, was one which proposed reversing the colours of the traffic light sequence, red to become Go and green Stop. It was quickly forgotten. The lights have remained the same, and traffic still keeps right.

The streets and avenues are all lined with shops. The people still cling to their traditional habits as far as shopping is concerned. They keep to a kind of purchase cycle, determined by the seasons of the year, the old festivals which have theoretically been abolished, and the phases of the moon. On such a moon, it is time to buy winter clothing, on another, a particular kind of sweetmeat. Then, of course,

each season brings its own specialty: melons and watermelons in summer, persimmons and cabbages in autumn, preserved fruits in winter.

Following the famine and privations of 1960-61, market-garden production in the countryside round Peking was considerably stepped up. Entire people's communes now specialize in supplying the capital with [lettuce] and vegetables. The year 1963 saw the end of the "vegetable war": although the government still frowns on the practice, peasants now come into the city again to sell their produce directly to the housewife. Street-sellers go from house to house with fresh fruit and vegetables, ringing a bell to announce their wares; some also carry out odd jobs, like mending umbrellas, sharpening knives, and so on.

One thing that impresses itself on the visitor as he walks the streets of Peking is the importance of food. The Pekingese eat several times a day—whenever the occasion offers, in fact—and they eat a lot: huge bowls of noodles or rice, with sauce or a few pickled vegetables or pieces of pork or chicken. Coupons are needed for flour, oil, sugar and cakes, but they are used much more as a check on consumption than as a form of rationing. Some of the shopping districts are used by the local people as places to meet, chat and stroll, where they can buy, catch up on gossip, have a snack and find simple entertainment.

Before the Cultural Revolution, people used to go out to shop once a fortnight after payday. The theatres and cinemas were all packed. But the favourite outing used to be to go to a restaurant for a meal on Saturday evenings, either the

3. Most of the members of the Red Guard organization came from rural areas.

whole family or the husband with a group of friends, to sample some of the specialties Peking restaurants are still famous for: soup with ravioli, bean curd, various kinds of tripe, preserved fruits, and of course Peking duck (which the best restaurants serve in fifteen different ways), all washed down with the famous hot rice wine. Whisky, gin and vodka are also available. In summer, the usual drink is Chinese beer from Tientsin,⁴ orangeade, tea, or simply hot water.

Today, to prevent people spending too much money in restaurants like the “bourgeois” used to do, everybody who goes out to eat has to sign a register stating how much they have spent at the restaurant.

People are only beginning to realize now how much freedom they used to have, when they could come and go as they pleased, buy what they liked, celebrate, go to the theatre and cinema and spend all their pay-packet on a Saturday night if they felt like it. They were just starting to live more fully, and make the most of the plentiful supplies of food and clothing which they had never known before. Conversations were optimistic, everything seemed to be going better, and there were hopes that the standard of living would go on rising.

This optimism was officially encouraged, people were told they were working for “a better life,” which was understood as meaning more consumer goods. But now this “bourgeois” attitude is condemned. Life has become depressing and difficult. The invasion of Red Guards from the provinces has upset the life of the street, paralyzed transportation and unbalanced the functioning of the commercial market.

4. A large town in northern China, near Peking.

The Pekingese no longer feel they want to hang around in the street to pass the time of day, nobody goes out much in the evenings. To get into food shops, restaurants or on to buses, you now have to queue: people prefer to hurry home, keeping on the right side of the regime by pinning portraits of Chairman Mao on their front door and in the living room.

The city seems to be unnaturally calm most of the time, then is suddenly seized by inexplicable bouts of feverish activity. People are on edge, waiting for new political developments and their sequel: houses searched, public confessions, arrests, punitive expeditions, witch-hunts for middle-class families and bad officials, and so on. When it is necessary, they take part in demonstrations. Everybody makes the best of the situation, does what he has to—but no more. Life is reorganized to weather the storm. One avoids discussing serious topics, and out of suspicion or simply prudence one avoids meeting friends. Peking is afraid. Peking is waiting.

In Automobile Factory Number One

In this reading Hugo Portisch presents a view of budding Chinese industry. Portisch is a well-known Austrian journalist and editor of the *Vienna Kurier*. His book, *Red China Today*, is based on an extended visit to China.

I had asked for permission to visit a Chinese auto factory because the automobile industry is an index of technological development and a measure of the living standard. "You must see China's Automobile Factory Number One," I was told.

Apparently, this is the only automobile plant that is willingly shown to foreign visitors, perhaps because the others are busy turning out armaments; perhaps, too, because their installations are less impressive than those of Plant Number One.

Plant Number One is no mere factory, it is a city. The housing quarters came first, then squares and parks, and finally we drove through a great archway and to the factory proper. I remembered other automobile cities—Detroit and the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg—and was impressed by one striking difference: here there were no cars. In this Chinese city where so many cars are manufactured, traffic consists entirely of streetcars and the two-wheeled horse carts that bring vegetables to market and materials to building sites.

But we were in one of China's most modern industrial plants, and I was impressed by my first look at it. There were at least thirty big workshops, each about a thousand yards long. Between them ran strips of grass and wide driveways. Electric trucks and fork-lift trucks were running between the buildings, all of them handled by women. Our car stopped in front of the administration building. A small man in a simple uniform-like suit stood waiting for us at the entrance. He was introduced as the plant manager.

As usual we went directly to the salon, and as everywhere else, the Party secretary and the chairman of the union were waiting for us. We began our interview by sipping green tea and smoking Chinese cigarettes.

I asked why we had not met a single passenger car on our way or in the city itself. The director smiled politely, even a little condescendingly. "We do not have private cars."

"Then cars are only for the privileged?"

"A car is not a luxury but a necessity,

† Hugo Portisch, *Red China Today* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1967).

meant to serve a cause rather than an individual,” he explained. “The cause requires that government and Party functionaries, city administrators and business executives have access to state-owned vehicles. None of these vehicles can be used without restriction, even by officials. They have to be requisitioned from government car pools, and the purpose of the trip must be stated.” He added, “In this country, private cars are driven only by former capitalists and in Shanghai.”

However, he seemed aware that Americans and Europeans measure the prosperity of a nation by the number of cars its people own. “We are not opposed to the ownership of cars by anyone, including workingmen,” he said. “But it will not do for some to have cars while others don’t. Everyone should have a car; any other way would be wrong.”

Again the sly dig at the Soviet Union:¹ “There are brother nations, socialist countries, where this principle is no longer followed, but that’s a revisionist policy.”

I asked how this policy of “cars for everyone” could be achieved except step by step. He had no answer. Now it was clear to me why I had seen no gas pumps or service stations in China. All cars, without exception, are serviced by government car pools. Nor are the cross-country roads suitable for driving. A few main highways are indicated on the map, but I was told that most of them were in bad condition, with long stretches that could hardly be traveled by trucks and tractors. The government has given priority to extending the railway network.

Just the same, I had been told that

Automobile Factory Number One manufactured not only trucks but also passenger cars. I asked about this, adding that I would like to see the assembly plant for passenger cars and that I myself would like to drive a Chinese car.

This request embarrassed my hosts. At that time the factory was turning out nothing but trucks. The passenger cars they had made were unsatisfactory.

“Why?”

“We didn’t like the body. It was an attempt to combine modern design with the traditional Chinese style. The shape was wrong. We have commissioned our young technicians and art school graduates to come up with a new body design. Until then, production will be at a standstill.”

The car that had been produced here was a large model, two hundred horsepower. It was called “Red Flag” and was larger than the other two Chinese cars, the “Phoenix” and “The East Glows.” Even these two have six-cylinder engines and 150 horsepower.

“Are there no Chinese compact cars?”

“No, what for? Private individuals can’t buy cars, and a compact is too small for government use.”

I asked how much the “Red Flag” cost. The answer explains why any car in China is beyond the means of the individual. The “Red Flag” was priced at 30,000 yuan (\$12,000).

At that, we wouldn’t regard the “Red Flag” as a luxury car. In performance it is about equivalent to a small Chevrolet, in spite of its high horsepower. Maximum speed is about 100 miles per hour and it has three forward speeds and no overdrive.

But I did get to drive the “Red Flag,”

1. In the early days of Communist China, the Soviet Union was helpful in many ways, but a bitter rivalry developed in the late 1960’s.

after all. When we emerged from the last workshop, after a two-hour inspection of the factory, a brand-new “Red Flag” with a chauffeur in a white duster at the wheel was standing before the door. The upholstery was protected by nylon seat covers and the driven mileage showed 9 miles.

“We produced fifteen of these cars for the Party anniversary,² and one is still here.”

I was invited to get in, and we took a trial spin. “As you can see, the car is still too noisy. It is our aim to create a Chinese Rolls-Royce. You know what the English say about the Rolls-Royce—that inside the car you can hear only the ticking of the passenger’s watch. Naturally, that’s an exaggeration. But I must say that we would like to produce a car without noise.”

I didn’t think the car was that noisy, but when I said so, the chauffeur repeated that it was scheduled to become the Rolls-Royce of China, and that there would be no further production until they could achieve that goal.

The shop where the “Red Flags” had been produced was shut down, and production was at a standstill. On the other hand, the other shops were in full swing. Two types of trucks were being produced, a four-ton truck with a 90 horsepower engine and a two-and-a-half ton truck with 110 horsepower and overland four-wheel drive. Both of them were copies of Soviet trucks, which in turn were copies of American models. Thus American design had entered Automobile Factory Number One via Moscow. The layout of the factory is also largely based on Soviet designs, which again follow the American pattern.

2. The People’s Republic of China was founded on October 2, 1949.

The plant was equipped with conveyors and assembly lines, but they were not in full operation. Eight trucks an hour is the production rate. But this plant works only one eight-hour shift; there is a shortage of skilled workers and apparently also of material, making more than one shift impossible. “The factory cannot meet the needs of the country.”

Not by a long shot. I was unable to find out whether there is a number two or three plant in China. Visitors who saw this factory a few years ago have written that they did not know why it was called Number One, as there was no other in China. I am not so sure that a second or even a third factory hasn’t been built, because the manager said, “We are in a position to produce not only trucks but also the machinery for outfitting other automotive plants.”

In any case, there must be several other factories for the production of vehicles for the armed forces.

Altogether, 21,000 workers were employed in the factory. As in all Chinese factories, the workers’ housing section was built by the factory and made up part of the industrial city.

Considering the production figures, it is understandable that passenger car production has been discontinued for a time and that all efforts are concentrated on producing light trucks. Although I had been shown the “Phoenix” passenger car produced in Shanghai and “The East Glows” produced in Peking, neither of these comes off an assembly line; they are produced piece by piece.

It is not surprising, then, that the cars of Chinese officials are still foreign models, mostly from the East bloc countries.

Letters from Red China

The following selection gives an intimate glimpse into the life of a Chinese family through letters written by an American-born Chinese woman to her sister in the United States. The letters are especially interesting for the American reader for they reveal the attitude of a Chinese who lived in the United States for more than twenty years and who chose to go to China with her husband who was born there. Bear in mind that all letters leaving China are subject to censorship, and therefore the letter writer is inclined to write what she thinks the authorities will approve. Try to assess the sincerity of these letters as you form a picture of family life in China.

February, 1957

Dearest Helen and Ron,

I was thrilled and excited to get your January letter, Helen. I read it just before dinner and had a terrible time calming myself in order to eat. I hope that now the ice is broken, we shall keep in constant touch with each other.

Let me give you a picture of what our family is doing. I stay at the school where I work about thirty miles away. I make a week-end trip home every other Saturday and return to work on Monday morning. It is a bit strenuous but I hope to be transferred during the summer vacation. Fortunately Richard is quite capable of managing with the children single-handed.

Linda and Jenny who are now 11½ and 9½, respectively, are rather able girls who can do a lot to help out with domestic duties. Mei-mei attends the day nursery run by the College. She is very happy and contented there. In another two years she'll be entering grade school. The children here enter grammar school at the age of seven, after six years go on to junior high, and after three more years to senior high. Linda is now in the fifth grade, Jenny in the third. Linda is the domestic one in our family, she is very fond of shopping for groceries, washing vegetables, arranging the house and so forth. Jenny is the academic one—she's crazy about books—reads at every opportunity. Her grades are better than Linda's, in fact she was

† Daniel R. Birch and D. Ian Allen, eds., *Letters from Red China*, Bulletin 68b, Asian Studies Curriculum Project (Berkeley: University of California, 1968).

accorded the title of “Excellent Student” last year. Mei-mei likes to draw. She’s the most temperamental of the three, but we are careful not to spoil her.

My work as librarian and laboratory custodian at High School No. 27 keeps me on the run eight hours a day and six days a week. I do the purchasing of books, registering, labeling, classifying, lending, recommending, and publicizing. The other half of the time, preparing for physics and chemistry experiments (assisting the teachers), and doing the cleaning-up job. In the evenings, I go to a movie or stay in school and read the papers or library books. Every Friday noon I attend an adult class in Literature and Composition. Before, I had no idea what my Chinese Language level was—now I’m in the 3rd year of junior high. Composition is my most difficult subject. Because of my dependable and conscientious attitude towards my work and studies, I was awarded the title of “Excellent Teacher” last year and received a prize consisting of a fountain pen (the one I’m using now), diary, bottle of ink, a book and a towel. Not bad, eh? Of course, this is quite an honor. It is also something to urge me to do better in the future and live up to the name bestowed on me.

April, 1958

... Everything in China, no matter whether it be on the industrial front, the agricultural front, or the cultural and educational front, is moving by leaps and bounds. We are going to overtake Great Britain in the chief industrial outputs within 15 years. We teachers in schools and universities are striving hard to be all-round

so that we can train and educate all-round students. The chief aim is to combine theory and practice in serving the country and our people.

On the industrial front, China is producing her own airplanes, trucks, jeeps, tractors, etc. A lot of heavy machinery used in factories and mills is manufactured by the Chinese too.

And on the cultural field advances are constantly being made. At present Chinese is made easier to learn. The present tasks in the reform of the Chinese language are three-fold: the simplification of the Chinese characters; the devising and popularizing of the Chinese phonetic alphabet and the spreading of the “common speech.” The “common speech” was historically developed from what was formerly called “Mandarin” abroad, which was spoken by about 70% of the Chinese people (not including those using national minority languages). We are using this “common speech” in our teaching and students in every school throughout the country are learning to speak it.

Speaking of breaking world records, China has quite a few sportsmen who are world champions. In 1957 China’s champion woman high jumper, Chang Fengjung, cleared 1.77 meters, breaking the world record of 1.76 meters held by Mildred McDaniel of the United States. Then there are champions in weightlifting. At any rate, Chinese sportsmen are catching and overtaking the world’s best.

... Right now, we’re listening to recordings of Paul Robeson over the radio. We frequently hear music of all countries over the air. Sometimes there are recordings of American folk songs, too. By the way, China is producing its own television sets now.

February, 1959

... So many things have happened during the past year that I really don't know where to begin. You've probably read about some of the happenings in China in the newspapers. Isn't it amazing that China has made such wonders in the agricultural and industrial fronts last year! It goes to prove that once the people throughout the country are rallied to a common cause—a cause for the benefit of the people—any miracle can happen. The people have become bold to think, to speak and to act, in other words, they are breaking down dogmatic conventions, doing away with superstitions. Our bumper harvest in wheat, in rice, in cotton, etc., last year was the result of the great display of intelligence of the common peasants. Our victory in the steel front was also due to the vigorous support of the people and to the active part every citizen took in the fight for steel. Really, every man, woman and child contributed his part in overfulfilling the quota. What part did we take? Well, we took part in making home-made blast furnaces, transporting coal and iron ore, built roads and highways and so forth. It was rather strenuous but we enjoyed every minute of it for we knew all the time that we were doing our share in making China a strong industrial country.

Whenever there's a chance we go to nearby factories to help the workers in their work. By constant contact with the working people we can learn a lot of things from them—their fine and noble traits, their love of life and labor, their unselfishness, frankness, honesty, and above all, their optimistic outlook on life. All in all,

our educational policy is: education must be combined with productive labor. This guarantees the standard and quality of our work and studies, otherwise, education for education's sake cannot serve the practical needs of the people. This educational policy applies to grade school and high school, too. The children are taught to love labor and understand that labor creates everything. Therefore, workers and peasants are deeply respected.

Last week a group of us went to town to see the Agricultural Exhibition. There are cabbages the size of a wash basin about 16"-17" in diameter, giant carrots and turnips and cauliflowers. "Dry" cows can be milked, too! That is, dairy cows that haven't borne calves can be treated to furnish milk. Roosters can be treated to hatch eggs. "Dry" clouds can be treated to produce rainfall and storms can be dispersed mechanically. Hogs weighing over 1,000 pounds were on display also. With the establishment of People's Communes all over the country, such agricultural progress will be sure to continue by leaps and bounds hereafter.

By the way, Richard competed in the 100 meter dash in the College last June and made it in 13.6 seconds which is not bad for his age. I took part in the 100 meter dash last summer, too, just for the fun of it. You can imagine the result considering it was the first time in my life I ever laid foot on the race track! Another teacher who is three years older than I am also took part. We two added some hilarity to the race. Last year and this year I also took part in the hand-grenade throwing contest. The coaches say that I can become a good hand at it after some training because I have a strong wrist. But I'm afraid I've

passed my time for engaging in athletics. How about you, Helen? Do you still play tennis?

December, 1961

... Here it is, Christmas Eve already and I haven't answered your November letter. How ashamed I am!

Thank you for your concern over us. Actually we are much better off than you think. We've been having some difficulties, it's true, but we've managed to overcome them. It's natural to have shortages what with having had three consecutive years of natural calamities, but these difficulties are only temporary. What's more, the effects of the natural calamities are only regional. Some areas were hard hit this year—suffered from drought—but with the people united together working hard to overcome hardships and with assistance from various parts of the country the district has come through all right. Of course this doesn't mean they have everything as is the case with the people in other places under normal circumstances, but they have their fill every meal three times a day and they are working hard as usual. There have been no signs of slacking whatever. On the contrary, everybody is working and studying happily and is very optimistic about the future. Courage, diligence and optimism characterize the Chinese people, you know. What may seem to the people of the West to be hardship is really nothing to the Chinese people. Of course the Chinese want comforts and conveniences, who doesn't? But while they are working hard to build a better and more happy life they are down to earth and face whatever may come. Obstacles

and stumbling blocks are only natural in one's life. It is a matter of how one should look at them and react towards them. Such is the philosophy, hence we are not in the least down-hearted during the present temporary difficult period. The main thing is that in spite of the temporary difficulties the whole of the country is advancing—and that's what counts! So, if my letters describing our life and work here seem to indicate nothing but toil to you, and therefore cause you all to be anxious, there's nothing strange at all. We do not consider our work here as toil in the sense that you consider it. We are working hard indeed, but it is all of our free will. As for recreation, we go to the cinema at least once a week. We can go to the opera too, if we want to—but I, for one, haven't yet learned to appreciate it. Sometimes a good play is performed here for our enjoyment. We listen to the radio for our musical entertainment.

Helen, I'm happy to know you are interested in what's what in China and that you're buying reading material to help you learn what's going on. But I suggest that if you really want to get an accurate account, get hold of or subscribe to "Women of China," "China Reconstructs" and "China Pictorial." You will find that the contents of my letters compare factually to the contents of these periodicals. These are printed in Peking and can be obtained at various dealers throughout the world. Shall I send you a subscription to one of them? Let me know if you want me to.

With love to you, Ron and the children from us all,

Your loving sister,
Nancy

The Effect of Mao Tse-tung's Thought in Rural China

After the Russian Revolution the position of the Communist leadership in the U.S.S.R. was established and consolidated by means of purge, imprisonment, and execution. In China, the emphasis has been on "thought reform" as a means of bringing about social change. In "thought reform" the focus is on Communist ideology and particularly on the thought of Chairman Mao Tse-tung. People are required to criticize and to inform on one another in order to correct their thinking. Self-criticism and public confession have frequently been required both of common men and of prominent office holders. Political study groups are formed in the neighborhood, in the school, in the factory, and even in the home. The thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are the object of much study and frequently of reverence. The following four readings help show the impact of thought reform on life in rural China.





A Family Meeting

This excerpt is taken from an English-language propaganda magazine printed in Peking. Any peasant telling such a story would be honored by the Communist party. However, this story is typical of those used within China to encourage loyalty to Mao and the party, and it may not even be true but merely written for propaganda purposes.

Holding Meetings with Specific Problems in Mind

In carrying out revolutionary criticism in our study class, we mainly use the method of holding family meetings for repudiation with particular problems in mind. We study one quotation from Chairman Mao and use it to repudiate one particular reactionary fallacy of China's Khrushchov,¹ fight a particular expression of self-interest in our minds and wipe out one specific way in which revisionism exerts its influence. As our production brigade had carried out the socialist education movement, not a few people thought that the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists had behaved themselves properly after being struggled against in that movement. Doing farm work together with

the poor and lower-middle [class] peasants, they talked and joked and so did not seem to harbour any vicious intentions. Members of my family also thought in this way and lacked vigilance against the enemy. With this problem in mind, we called a family meeting for repudiation.

Before the meeting began, we studied this quotation from Chairman Mao: "The imperialists and domestic reactionaries will certainly not take their defeat lying down and they will struggle to the last ditch. After there is peace and order throughout the country, they will still engage in sabotage and create disturbances in various ways and will try every day and every minute to stage a comeback. This is inevitable and beyond all doubt, and under no circumstances must we relax our vigilance." Chairman Mao's teaching enabled the whole family to realize that our class enemies would not be reconciled to their defeat. Though they pretended to

1. Liu Shao-chi, China's president, was labeled "China's Khrushchov" by supporters of Mao. See page 52.

† Yueh Chung, "My Family Runs a Mao Tse-tung's Thought Study Class," *Peking Review*, Vol. II, No. 27 (July 5, 1968).

behave themselves, they had a bellyful of evil designs and they were always the sworn enemies of the poor and lower-middle [class] peasants. Our struggle against this handful of class enemies was a life-and-death class struggle. China's Khrushchov, however, prattled that "the main class struggle at home has in the main been completed." With this fallacy as a target, the whole family engaged in merciless criticism and repudiation. My eldest son said: "China's Khrushchov declared that the main class struggle at home had in the main been completed. This is sheer nonsense! Hardly had the socialist education movement in our brigade come to an end than a rich peasant flooded the brigade's six *mu* of vegetable fields. We wanted to consolidate the collective economy, but he tried hard to undermine it. What is this if not class struggle?" I warned: "By spreading the theory of 'the dying out of class struggle,' China's Khrushchov was aiming at blurring the distinction between classes and making us negligent in the class struggle so that our class enemies could engage in sabotage and make trouble as they wished and finally bring about a capitalist restoration. Some of us are still not aware of this even when we have fallen into the trap. How dangerous that is!"

My wife had this to say: "I was poisoned by the theory of 'the dying out of class struggle.' I often felt that our class enemies were behaving themselves, but actually they only pretended to. Chairman Mao has warned us not to lower our guard, but I relaxed my vigilance. In doing this I was not loyal to Chairman Mao." After this repudiation, the whole family pledged always to bear in mind Chairman Mao's

great teaching: "Never forget class struggle!" to heighten our revolutionary vigilance a hundredfold and resolutely fight all our class enemies.

Always Be Ready to Repudiate Self-Interest

In carrying out revolutionary mass criticism, our study class also uses this method: Criticize whenever problems crop up. We give timely help to anyone in the family whose self-interest manifests itself, linking this fight against self-interest with the repudiation of revisionism.

In the spring of this year, when we were not very busy with farm work, I used to collect two baskets of dung before and after the day's work. I thought that, though a bit tired, I would get enough manure for my private plot. My younger daughter Hsiu-chen was studying in middle school and returned home every Saturday. Early one morning, she found me collecting dung at the cost of skipping my breakfast. She asked me: "Father! Are you collecting dung for the collective or for our own use?" Well aware of what might happen, I quibbled: "It will be sent to wherever necessary." At meal time, the table became a battlefield for fighting self-interest and repudiating revisionism. As it turned out, the whole family had detected my self-interest in collecting manure for our private plot. While eating, they helped me fight my self-interest in this matter and vigorously repudiated the reactionary "*san zi yi bao*"² fallacy advocated by China's Khrushchov—the extension of plots for private use and of free

2. An official program to increase private incentive and production.

markets, the increase of small enterprises with sole responsibility for their own profits and losses, and the fixing of output quotas based on the household. My younger daughter spoke first, she said: "Father! By disregarding collective production and devoting yourself to farming your private plot, you have been poisoned by the 'san zi yi bao.' If our brigade members all looked after their own affairs like that, wouldn't the collective economy collapse?" My younger son reminded me: "Devoting oneself to one's private plot means making us poor and lower-middle

[class] peasants return to past miseries. Father! You should never forget the sufferings of the old days!" I learnt much from what they said. So after breakfast, I went straight to the production team leader. I told him: "Last winter and this spring, I collected three cart-loads of manure. Originally I planned to put it on my private plot. But after fighting self-interest and repudiating revisionism, I realize that I have been badly influenced by China's Khrushchov. I have now decided to turn all that manure over to the team."



In an attempt to reinforce students' understanding and respect for the working masses, urban youths have been encouraged to participate in agricultural work. They sometimes spend one month to a year away from their studies helping the peasants in the communes.

Thirteen Months in a Rural Commune

Mao Tse-tung developed the ideal of the agrarian peasant proletariat as the basis of the Chinese revolution. In "Letters from Red China," a writer of urban bourgeois background expressed admiration for the "noble peasants." In so doing she was in accord with the party line. The following reading is an illustration of the means by which city-dwellers and students are encouraged to gain a "proletarian" point of view. Ching Chi, who worked as an interpreter for Jan Myrdal, gave him an account of her *lao dung*, or physical labor, in Liu Ling. She speaks positively of the value of the experience.

In 1953 I joined the League of Youth, and, in 1956, I became a member of China's Communist Party.¹ My work is that of secretary in Intourist in Sian. I earn seventy-four yuan a month, am married and have two sons, one of eight and one of five. I did thirteen month's *lao dung*, from the spring of 1959 to the spring of 1960, that is voluntary physical work. I did this in Liu Ling.

I came from a milieu that is not proletarian. We have always been well off. My father is a doctor, and when I was small he was in charge of a clinic in Szechwan. My mother went to college. My father was a Christian. He despised traditional medicine, which he called quackery. What he

thinks about it now, I don't know. I expect he was reformed after the liberation, along with the rest. At the moment he is in Moscow studying neuro-surgery. I don't know whether or not he is still a Christian. I was sent to a school run by Canadian nuns. They taught me to play the piano. We used to sing psalms.

Life was never difficult for us, nor were we ever short of food. My father loved cleanliness above all else. I was forbidden to go out to the kitchen; if I did so despite this, then I was beaten. He would give me ten strokes. This was because in Szechwan food is cooked over wood fires, and I could have made myself grimy. I looked down on our servants. They were dirty. I grew up thus and became lazy. I could not use a broom or even wash myself.

1. Most of the twenty million members come from youth organizations. In order to become a member one goes through a long training in criticism and leadership.

† Jan Myrdal, *Report from a Chinese Village* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1965).

After the liberation, I learned a lot about how the proletariat felt, it is true, but actually I myself looked down on the poor, because they were uneducated and uncouth and filthy.

I know that I was always saying: 'The farmers are good. The working class and the poor farmers are the leading classes. All honour to work. All honour to the workers. Physical labour is the highest.' I often said that at meetings, but I didn't mean anything by it. I really thought the working class and the poor farmers [were] an uneducated, dirty lot, and even though I did in a way believe what I said—in that I believed in the liberation of the Chinese people—I was only paying lip service by saying that. I considered it to be our, the intellectuals,' job to be the leaders. Which we have always been. I had no contact with working people. As far as I was concerned, this business of class and class struggle was something quite abstract. Those were just words.

But after the liberation, I did at least start washing myself. Before, I had had a servant to do that for me. In 1953, when I was twenty, I got married. But I did no housework, and I did not run the house. My mother-in-law did that.

In 1958, the party exhorted all young ganbus² to do their share of physical labouring and go out among the people. We decided that all the ganbus in our organization must go and spend a year in the country.

There were nine of us in the group I was in.

We were to be re-educated and given a proletarian attitude to life. We were to fortify our physique and help the people's

commune, to which we were sent, in its work. We were five women and four men. I had discussed all this with my husband. Of course, it was a pity being unable to be together for a year; but we had discussed it all thoroughly and come to the conclusion that one year was not of such great significance in a whole life. It was important to do one's share of physical work and also necessary for me, if I was to be a true revolutionary woman.

My husband works at the university. He teaches Russian. He was going to use this year for further study.

My group was attached to Liu Ling People's Commune. The commune decided that we should join Liu Ling Labour Brigade, so all nine of us drove out to Liu Ling. That was on March 2, 1959. It was a warm afternoon, and the Old Secretary, Li Yiu-hua, was sitting outside the cave here, smoking. He gazed at us for a while, then he said: 'I know that most of you have never done any real work before in your lives. We will try to help you. You won't have to do too much to begin with. I shall try to find simple jobs for you at first, so that you can accustom yourselves to working with your hands. The best thing, perhaps, will be for you to start by trundling up dry dung and helping to carry soil. After that, we shall see.' Two in our group had done physical work before, but the other seven of us had never done a thing. The first fortnight was difficult for all of us. We ached all over and fell asleep the moment we lay down. But at least nobody laughed at us. Then, little by little, things began to go better. But even the two who said they had done physical work before were as tired as the rest of us, although we were only doing the lightest

2. Civil servants, white-collar workers, or party officers.

jobs, the sort of things that otherwise [was] only given to the old men, and to the women whose feet had been bound,³ to do.

We had two caves, one for women, one for men. We had a man who cooked for us. He cooked for his family at the same time. We were still paid by our office and got the same salary as we had had in Sian. Twice a week I got a letter from my husband. We helped build the collective dining-hall behind here, which they were going to use at harvest-time. Sometimes we would show a film there in the evening.

In July, I was chosen to lead the women's group. We held the meeting on the open space in front of the cave here. We held meetings once a month to discuss our work and plan the next month's work. The brigade leader had had a talk with me, at which he said: 'The women's group needs your help. There are now three work leaders among the women here and not one of them can either read or write. Your job is not only to lead the work, but also to teach the other leaders to read and write. You'll have six months in which to do it.' I said to him: 'If it really is so that the women are relying on me and have chosen me themselves, of course I shall do my best.' At the meeting, I was elected. I was very happy that the women believed in me. That was my first position of trust. At first, I was a bit scared by the job, because, after all, I was a town girl, so how could I take charge of things in the country? Everything there was so different. But after a month I had become one of the group. Well, when I left Liu Ling, at least one of the women labour leaders was able to read and write sufficiently well to be able to

keep a work daybook and calculate the day's work.

Well, after that I worked all the time. I ploughed and I weeded. I dug and I sowed. I had to learn everything. Every Monday and Tuesday evening, I went to the three leaders of the women's group and taught them reading and writing. Otherwise, when off duty, I went round visiting the families. I was supposed to be on the look-out for difficulties, such as a child ill or anything else. Where there were any, I would help the women in the cave or try to find some other woman in the vicinity who could come and help her. But it was out in the fields that I talked most with the women. We have occasional rests, and then the women sit and chat.

At the same time, I worked at my own ideological re-education. I had, you see, to transform myself from a bourgeoisie to a human being. This was done partly by physical work and partly by reading. I read a book called *Steel Yourself in the Fight with a Hundred Thousand Difficulties*. I read Liu Shao-chi's *How to Become a Good Communist*. I read a variety of articles. We tried to spend as much time as possible with the people of Liu Ling. We were not going to huddle together or make a sort of urban clique. We were to learn from the people and become one with them.

We paid nine yuan a month for our food. We ate a lot because, of course, we were now doing physical labour. Before we went out to the fields in the morning, we helped the families where the husband was working in the town or elsewhere. The women in such families had a hard time of it. We fetched water from the well for them, and we also swept up outside their caves. We helped the women wash the

3. Bound feet were a mark of beauty for women. This ancient habit became illegal in the 1920's.

clothes and make quilted winter coats. We also tried to help the women to learn a few characters. What we did was to draw a picture of something, a pig for example, and write the character for pig beside it. We gave ten such pictures to every woman who was interested, and they put them up on the walls of their caves, so that they should have them in front of their eyes all day long. After a week, they were supposed to exchange pictures with each other. The schoolchildren also helped in this voluntary study.

After the winter harvest was in, that was December 1959, there was less work in the fields. That is the time of year when life in the country quietens down and people occupy themselves with minor jobs. We then embarked on serious criticism and self-criticism. For two months we kept at this and held discussions about it. We went through each one's faults and judged whether they had corrected them and how. We probed into ourselves and examined each other and tried to get to the bottom of all our personal problems and each of our incorrect attitudes [towards] life and work. Sometimes, these meetings lasted half a day, and we went on day after day. Altogether we had seventy or more meetings. This meant that each of us in the group was analysed and corrected for anything up to fifty hours. These meetings were attended by the different *ganbus* in the village. Li Yiu-hua spoke at them, and so did the different leaders of the brigades and the labour groups and the party organizations. Even the villagers got up one after the other and told us what they thought about us and our work.

All that winter we went through our work and our behaviour in this way. After-

wards, there was not much left that we had not analysed and criticized. When you go on as long as that, you have no possibility of hiding behind fine phrases. Then, after thirteen months of *lao dung*, the time came for us to go home. I felt torn in two. On the one hand, I was longing dreadfully for my husband, but on the other hand I felt fearfully unhappy at having to leave Liu Ling. I had grown [fond of] the place and become part of it.

I shall never forget the morning we left. People had come down to the flat here to say goodbye. The women and I were in tears. They begged us to stay. Then they gave us eggs and pumpkin seeds, which are lovely. I wept [a lot]. You see, I had been working with the women's group and now I [had] to leave them. I knew all the women and had associated with them all the time and knew them better than I have ever known anybody in my life before. I had never been so close to people before. In my home, one did not behave like that. Then the car moved off and we drove away from Liu Ling.

I believe I learned a lot during those thirteen months. I became a different person. I had acquired a fundamentally proletarian attitude to life. For example, before, in the summer, if I thought it too hot, I used to hope it would rain, without stopping to think whether the rain would be good for the harvest or not. I can never do that again. Now, I automatically think first how the weather will affect the harvest. That year also gave me self-confidence. I learned to rely on myself and my own capabilities.

Students and Peasants

The following account balances that of Ching Chi. Tung Chi-ping is a student of languages who escaped from China and came to the United States. Tung considered *lao dung* detrimental to the interests of both the students and the peasants. His story also contains accounts of two “struggle” meetings. Consider the psychological and social consequences of such techniques.

We found ourselves on an agricultural cooperative outside Shanghai. I picked cotton. We worked from eight to twelve and from one to five; in the evening, lamps were put up in the fields and we worked from seven to twelve. We did this seven days a week. Our daily ration was a bowl of watery cabbage soup and a bowl of the coarsest rice. Even the progressives had to work. In fact, the only one who had an easy time was the general's son. At first he kept records of how much cotton we each picked. He did not do this properly, however, and a regular bookkeeper had to be assigned to the actual recording.

Worse than the hard work and discomfort was the hostility of the peasants. They had been forced to give up all their possessions, and their sole income depended upon work points.

According to the propaganda, the peasants had voluntarily donated their possessions to “the people” and had de-

manded to be organized into the commune system. We students, then, had spontaneously rushed into the countryside in order to express our appreciation by helping our agricultural comrades with the harvest.

The truth was that the peasants and the students loathed each other. Violence between us was only narrowly averted. One day a student found some sugarcane and took a piece of it. On that same day another student found an unharvested turnip in a field and ate it raw. Peasants had seen both instances; their anger simmered and then burst into fury. They approached us in a mob and I thought we would be attacked. We took up a collection and gave the peasants ten times the price for a piece of sugarcane and a turnip. One of the boys actually got on his knees and begged the peasants not to report the incident. Finally we made the peasants understand that we hated being there as

† Tung Chi-ping and Humphrey Evans, *The Thought Revolution* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1966).

much as they hated having us. We agreed that we all would somehow get along for the rest of the two-week period.

On the night before we were to leave, however, a meeting of the students convened in a field. We were addressed by a commune official. We were told that we and the peasants had discovered great love for each other and that we had found manual labor rewarding. Thus we had unanimously demanded another two weeks of the work. The authorities, as “servants of the people,” could only submit to our will.

The only light came from two lanterns on a table. We could see the official’s face, but he could not see ours. When he finished, an animal growl came from our group. Activists pushed forward and tried to drown out the sound by shouting slogans about our loyalty to the Party and to Chairman Mao. We growled louder. I could see the official’s smile change slowly to fear. He turned and disappeared into the dark. The growling stopped. I was sweating, trembling, and my heart was pounding. I know that we came close to attacking the man.

We learned later that the peasants’ reaction had been more violent than ours. They had argued bitterly against keeping the students there. To reinforce their argument, the “theft” of the piece of sugarcane and the turnip was brought out. A demand for punishment of the “thieves” was made, even though ten times the price of the food had been paid.

The Communists ordered a compromise. We students were to work one more week instead of two. We were threatened that anyone who objected would be a rightist, or even a counter-revolutionary.

We and the peasants worked sullenly.

Instinctively all of us slowed down. Our production was half what it had been previously. I was standing by my friend Hu when we read our production figures. “I don’t like this,” he said, “the comrades aren’t going to take this lying down.”

He was right; the day before the end of our shift, a cadre from our school’s Party Committee informed us that a struggle meeting would be held that night against three classmates. Two of the boys were the ones who had taken the piece of sugarcane and the turnip. The third boy, however, was the elected class chief. He was popular with all of us. He had always been honest and fair. Nevertheless, the cadre made us understand that we were to save our severest criticism for our class chief. We were to bring false accusations against him. He was to be convicted of real stealing.

The struggle meeting lasted from seven o’clock that evening until after midnight. I was so frightened that I might be accused of reluctance in protecting the masses from a backward element that I wanted to be the first to accuse the class chief of a crime. Stage fright made me hesitate, however, and my friend Hu was the first to make an accusation. He said that he had seen the class chief steal some money in a peasant’s hut.

A look of surprise and hurt came into the face of the class chief. As the other accusations were hurled at him, he looked at us dazed, unbelieving and frightened. I finally managed to speak. I said that I had seen him falsify the record of how much cotton he had picked. We never even mentioned the other two boys; finally, we were calling our class chief vile names and spitting at him. He sank to

his knees; his head was bowed and his face hidden in his arms.

The next day we returned to school—and to a new campaign called “rectification.” In our classroom, the name of each student was posted on the walls. The shortcomings of each student then were suggested and discussed by his classmates. He could defend himself, but the decision of his classmates was final. When his shortcomings had been decided upon, they were listed under his name on the wall. This was to remind him constantly of the deficiencies he was to overcome. The intention was that, when the process of criticism had been completed for everyone in the room, we would choose the one whom we considered to have the most serious shortcomings, and we would hold a struggle meeting against him.

The classmate we chose for struggle was the PLA¹ general’s son. Our resentment of his arrogance had been simmering and now it boiled over. We made a formidable list of his shortcomings. His list was unique in that every entry was true. His first reaction to our list was astonishment. Finally he exploded into rage. He cursed, threatened and shook his fists. When he quieted down, we voted to add to his list, “failure to listen to the masses,” “failure to accept the criticism of his classmates,” and “use of vile unacceptable language.” Thereupon he left the room; at the door, however, he told us that he would not attend the struggle meeting and that we would be sorry for having insulted him. We sent in the report of our rectification meetings to the school authorities.

We all knew that we were making a mistake. Truth had no part in the cam-

1. PLA stands for the People’s Liberation Army.

paign. What we were meant to do was to fake evidence that confirmed Marxist dogma. Thus, our bourgeois classmates were to be depicted as having the most and the worst shortcomings. Those like me who had an acceptable background but who were not activists were also criticized, but mildly. Activists with acceptable background were hardly criticized at all, and the general’s son should have been given only praise. Our insistence on telling the truth in this one instance destroyed the whole picture and we knew that the authorities would not stand for it.

For our struggle meeting the next day, three of the top committee members arrived. They were grim-faced, and we were suddenly frightened. In a short sharp speech we were told that we had come under the evil influence of a classmate whose rightist thinking was unmistakable. A primary function of Communist Party leadership, we were told, was to identify, isolate and suppress “enemies of the people.” In our case, the enemy was our erstwhile class chief, the boy we had struggled against at the commune.

For the next six hours we struggled against him again, but the first time was a love feast compared to what we were made to give him now. The cadres would accept nothing less than screaming frenzy from us. We also were encouraged to strike the ex-class chief with our fists and to spit on him. We were permitted to stop only when we were exhausted. Thereupon the cadres accepted the “will of the masses,” our classmate was sentenced to be expelled from the school and sent to manual labor in clearing virgin land on the northwest frontier. Everyone in the class was sick with revulsion.

The Effect of Mao Tse-tung's Thought in Urban China

Social control is tighter in China's cities than in remote rural areas. Scholars suggest that even the nature of family life and the nature of friendship have been profoundly altered in modern China. Constant pressure to inform on others and to engage in group self-criticism makes a person wary of confiding in anyone, even the members of his own family. The Chinese are constantly reminded of the impressive achievements made possible by the thought of Mao Tse-tung, and their pride in the progress of their nation is bound up with commitment to the teachings of its leader. A strong sense of moral purpose pervades education, the arts, athletics, and even labor. The following readings relate to social reform or cultural revolution as it is effected through many different means.





The Thought Revolution

In “The Thought Revolution,” Tung Chi-ping records experiences from his years in a Language Institute. Throughout his student days official policy held that students must become both “red” and “expert.” At certain periods more time was spent in political study, criticism, and “struggle” than in language study; it was more important to become “red” than “expert.” This reading illustrates the effect of “struggle” on a person who did not “see through” the system and develop strategies for survival.

Within the (Youth League) branch it was necessary to appoint a new deputy secretary. The only eligible person was Sun, and he was the only *genuine* “progressive” I ever met. He believed the regime’s propaganda. A poor peasant who was ten years older than the rest of us, he had always cooperated with the Communists and was now being rewarded with a chance for higher education. In making decisions, he always started with a consideration of official policy and then worked out the means of implementing the policy.

Ssi-li, however, decided what best suited her personally and then rationalized it to suit official policy. This led to the conflict between Ssi-li and Sun. He was shocked at her intrigues. Finally, he discovered that the “masses” loathed her; according to the propaganda, her authority

stemmed only from the masses, and Sun came to the conclusion that Ssi-li did not deserve authority.

By this time, the authorities were becoming concerned about the conflict. Thus, one of the officials questioned us individually. Most of the non-League members complained bitterly about Ssi-li’s intrigues and tyranny.

The official reminded me that during the previous term I had been subjected to struggle three times; he asked me if I felt that I had been unjustly treated. If I did feel this way, he told me that I would be entitled to an apology. Revenge would have been sweet, but it would have made my relations with Ssi-li more difficult. My objective was survival, not revenge. I therefore hastened to assure the official that I had not been treated badly; I said

[†] Tung Chi-ping and Humphrey Evans, *The Thought Revolution* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1966).

that I had not realized my mistakes until Ssi-li's criticism opened my eyes; since then, I had been able to work at correcting my shortcomings. My reply obviously pleased the official. He congratulated me on my attitude.

It should be understood that *because* Ssi-li was unpopular with our classmates, the authorities approved of her. They would have been suspicious of her if she had been genuinely liked; this would have indicated that she sided *with* the masses *against* the Communists.

Proof of this attitude came a week after we had been individually interviewed about her. I was the only one who expressed approval of her, but the announcement was made that she had been granted full Party membership. This was a great honor, and it indicated that she was approved of in every possible way.

One day, I was alone in our room for a moment with Lee. He said that Sun was collecting statements of our classmates' complaints against Ssi-li and that she was furious. Lee warned me to stay out of the controversy.

Sun came to me that evening and asked if Ssi-li had ever been unfair in dealing with me. I replied that I personally could find nothing to complain about concerning her. Most of our classmates, however, had poured out endless complaints, and Sun had evidence enough to get her expelled from the Institute.

Meanwhile, Ssi-li had been vilifying Sun to her superiors. She warned them that Sun was preparing a report that would be nothing but lies. Ssi-li threatened that anyone who testified against her would be guilty of "detracting from the prestige of the Party." This was a crime serious

enough to terrify everyone. Sun's report went to the Party officials. A meeting was called and each of our classmates was asked to confirm or deny his or her testimony given in Sun's report. Without exception, they denied the testimony.

Poor Sun! Time after time he tried to protest, to remind our classmates of what they had told him. When it was over, he sat there stunned. He obviously thought that our classmates had betrayed him.

He was struggled against for six hours before he broke down. He had participated frequently in these hate orgies, but he had always believed that the victims deserved what they got. This was the first time he had endured the torment, and he knew that it was unjust. He refused to accept the criticism; he pleaded with us to stop lying and to tell the truth of what originally had been told to him concerning Ssi-li. Finally, we were encouraged to hit him with our fists and to spit on him. When we left him, he was sprawled on the floor, face down, and sobbing.

That night, in the dormitory, he suddenly began screaming. He was mostly incoherent, but he seemed to be naming the classmates who, he felt, had been especially treacherous. He argued with them to himself and cursed them. The next day, however, he had another outburst in the classroom and had to be carried out struggling and shouting. Thereafter, he did not come to class at all, but we would see him wandering about the campus muttering to himself. Finally he was taken to a mental hospital.

I know that what he was unable to face was the fact that the treachery had come not from his classmates, who had acted only out of fear, but from the Party.

Theater and Thought Reform

This reading shows the place of the arts in a totalitarian state. The city theater, like the town minstrel, must serve the needs of society. Mrs. Hobbs, a California journalist, took advantage of her Australian nationality to obtain a visa for travel in China.

Every theater that I was in, or passed by and took a peek into, seemed to bear out [the] contention that theater in China occupies a high place in the people's lives. They were packed to the rafters, and not by people whose features or hands reflected a former upper-class background. By the worn appearance of their clothes, clean but patched, by their weather-beaten skin, their tough-skinned hands, they were obviously laborers and mechanical workers; their wives, dressed just as they do in the day in gray or navy without jewelry or make-up or any touch of frivolity, were often as not with them. The men congregated in the lobby at intervals, turning it into one cloud of smoke; the women remained in the theater.

The ballet, set on the island of Hainan, told the story of the girl Chuang Hua, vassal of a cruel landlord. In the opening scenes, she is whipped for an attempted escape. It is a scene of devastating, raw emotion: she struggles, writhing, her long black hair tumbling while the landlord,

wearing a white, Western-style suit and sunglasses, supervises, at whim joining the whipping with a long, knotted rope. Ultimately, helped by courageous and sympathetic fellow servants, Chuang Hua flees and hides in the forest.

There, she meets two young men who listen with anger at her familiar story. Chuang Hua doesn't know it but they are members of the Communist underground. Chuang Hua hasn't even heard of the Communist Party; they send her on to their camp.

At their secret hiding place, high in the mountains, Chuang Hua sees the red flag for the first time. As the audience wept, she embraced it. After training with other girls she goes into battle to capture the landlord's holdings. But she is "politically immature," the libretto says. When she sees the landlord, her own personal emotions overcome her. She fires at him prematurely in anger, forgetting the real meaning of "team work." As a result, the entire operation fails.

[†] Lisa Hobbs, *I Saw Red China* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966).

Shamed and ostracized, she returns to camp to do some political homework aimed at showing her that personal emotions are nothing; they must be set aside and overcome for higher goals. Finally, she battles the Kuomintang as the Communist male leader is burned to death. If my hair could stand on end it would have done so in the final scene, full of thundering sound and blazing color as all the women danced *en point* with rifles and fixed bayonets.

The audience was now on its feet and some of our interpreters were too moved to interpret. As the superb seventy-five-piece orchestra—playing a Chinese score reminiscent of Tchaikovsky—thundered to the finale, I looked at other Western guests. They looked stunned. No one was unmoved.

This was the first of two times that I was to see rosy-cheeked young girls dancing with fixed bayonets. Nor was there the slightest doubt as to the nature of the bayonet-fixed rifles within these dances: they were not dramatic decorations. They were weapons used with a dance step and arm position that lunged in short, horrible jabs and then thrust upwards.

It was a sobering, saddening sight, an

almost intolerable contrast to the gentleness and warmth around me. Some of the group voted to walk back to the hotel, but I wanted none of it. I wanted the privacy of my hotel room, for I felt shaken to the verge of tears. Li sat next to me in the bus.

"You spent eight years in the army," I said, without doubt belligerently. "You know what bayonets are used for, their specific use, I mean."

He passed his hand across his eyes as if he were tired.

"Yes," he said.

"Well, do you like the sight of these girls dancing ballet with bayonets? Is it a pleasant sight? It doesn't look very peace-loving to me. What are you trying to do?"

Again he was silent and finally said, very quietly,

"I wonder, have you ever given any thought to whose fault it is that the girls of China are dancing with bayonets and not . . .!" he hesitated.

"Babies?" I suggested.

"All right," he said, "bayonets and not babies in their arms?"

Maybe I should have argued but there was little fight left in me that night. I felt as if I'd been run over by a truck.



The old Peking Opera has abandoned its traditional style in order to serve revolutionary propaganda.

The Effect of Government Policy on Progress in Modern China

When Communism was established in 1949, conditions in China were chaotic as the result of twenty years of international and civil war fought on Chinese soil. The first years of the People's Republic were given to reviving the economy. The assistance of Chinese capitalists was sought in rebuilding factories, improving transportation, stabilizing currency, and building trade. Little attempt was made at social reorganization, but the new leaders demonstrated skill in establishing efficient local government throughout China. In 1953 the adoption of the first Five-Year Plan attempted to socialize and industrialize the nation. Farm cooperatives were established and both agricultural and industrial production, almost entirely under government control, improved rapidly.

After years of pressure to adopt the party line, the Chinese were faced with an apparent liberalization of policy in 1957, when party leaders adopted an old Chinese proverb, "Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend." People were encouraged to air their criticisms of the party and of officials. The dikes burst and bitter denunciations flowed. Wall newspapers and placards appeared criticizing personnel and policies of the regime. Intellectuals spoke out after years of cautious silence. The "hundred flowers," however, were not permitted to bloom for long, and many citizens who





had “blossomed” during that period lived to regret their words and actions when the policy changed.

Chinese harvests of 1957 and 1958 were excellent and industry was growing. Chinese people were optimistic about their ability to improve their country’s agricultural and industrial production and to achieve a standard of living comparable to the West. In a climate of such optimism the government policy of the “Great Leap Forward” was formulated. The nation was expected to advance on all fronts through the dedication of all its people. Unfortunately many new programs were pursued with more zeal than knowledge, and frequently the attempt to achieve impossible goals led to failure. As conditions worsened, efforts to reach production quotas reached frenzied proportions because government officials and industrial personnel could not admit that official government policy was failing. The problem was compounded by drought, flood, and crop failure from 1959 to 1962. One writer referred to the period that followed as the “small leap backward.” The drive to communize the country slowed to a halt. Pressure to industrialize was replaced by a new campaign to “adjust the economy with agriculture as the base and industry the dominant factor.” The new emphasis indicated that with three-quarters of a billion people to feed, great value had to be placed on the work of the food producer,

the rural peasant. A move to the cities to find industrial jobs would be disastrous when food production was critical and industrial jobs were not available. City-dwellers were encouraged to return to country villages to reduce urban food consumption. Many neighborhood industries such as backyard steel furnaces were abandoned, and it became clear that utopia was more distant than had been imagined.

In the mid-1960’s China emerged from economic crisis with improving harvests, growing industry, and increasing foreign trade. However, the high degree of unity maintained by the leadership of the party for over fifteen years was disrupted in the events which have come to be known as the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.” Conflict developed in the Chinese Communist Party between factions supporting President Liu Shao-chi, the organization man, and Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the ideological leader. The fervor of revolution had been in danger of waning as the country was settling down to the job of economic and social development. Under such conditions organization may gradually take over from ideology, modifying it as necessary. Mao Tse-tung had seen such moderating influences effect changes under Krushchov’s U.S.S.R., and he was anxious to whip up continuing revolutionary spirit in China. The challenge he faced brought about in 1966 the

creation of revolutionary commitment in the youth of China who were born too recently to have experienced conditions in pre-revolutionary China. To stir up such spirit, youth in the Red Guards needed “enemies of the revolution” toward whom they could direct hatred and abuse. People within the party who “take the capitalist road,” “rightists,” and “reactionary elements” were made enemies. The greatest enemy of all was President Liu Shao-chi, labelled “China’s Krushchov.” All over the nation, organization and administration were disrupted by the Red Guards. For eighteen months schools were closed and many students participated in the Cultural Revolution. By the fall of 1967 the Cultural Revolution seemed to have subsided and schools had reopened with a curriculum based on the works of Mao Tse-tung. Although industry and trade had slipped badly, the grain harvest in 1967 was the best ever. However, factional fighting continued in many parts of China through 1968.

Late in 1968 a decisive turn on the Cultural Revolution took place when President Liu Shao-chi was deposed and imprisoned. It appeared that the Maoists had won an important victory. Their concern seemed to be directed to the problem of restoring law and order. In order to do this, the disruptive influence of the Red Guards had to be removed. As 1969 began millions of young students

and city-dwellers were being sent to the countryside to work on the communes and “learn from the peasants.” No one can predict the events of China’s future. It appears that the Chinese Communist Party will continue to lead the nation and that changes among the elite at its head will result in varying degrees of disruption.

When policy is formed in Peking, the lives of people throughout China are affected. A totalitarian regime is able to mobilize huge labor armies to undertake gigantic public works. At times, as many as seventy million Chinese freed from food production by the chill of winter have been engaged in water conservation projects. Work teams have labored under floodlights constructing dams and canals. Workers who raise complaints in their factories can be sent to such construction projects for “reform through labor.”

The readings of this final section have been chosen to illustrate the effects of Chinese government policy on the lives of the Chinese.

Bamboo H-Bomb

In the mid-1950's, Mao Tse-tung decided to face the drastic shortage of tools and machinery by utilizing China's tremendous reserve of manpower. The Communist leaders decided that hands could successfully replace machines and that millions of people could be rapidly mobilized for any large-scale projects. This plan was called the Great Leap Forward and was received at first with great enthusiasm by the masses.

Of the major Chinese Communist campaigns this is the best documented, and this reading presents many of its plans and failures. The writer, Valentin Chu, a Chinese scholar residing in New York, is highly critical of the current regime.

The results were spectacular and instant. Established within a few months in 1958 were 1,000 iron and steel works, 17,000 coal mines, 4,300 power stations, 400 oil refineries, 1,000 synthetic oil plants, 30,000 cement factories, and "innumerable" machine, chemical, and light industrial factories. In all China "no less than 5 million technical innovations" were devised. Agronomy was blessed by 3,000 experiments, 400 inventions, and 248 volumes on applied techniques. Theoretical science was enriched by 34 volumes of work totaling 9.3 million words, and a planned 13 volumes on isotopes, ultrasonics and stimulant agencies. Students in 222 colleges invented 56,000 tools, with 1,500

up to international advanced standards.

Among the popular technical innovations were deep plowing and close sowing in farming. Instead of plowing 5 inches deep and planting rice sprouts 6 inches apart as normally done, the party ordered plowing up to 2 feet deep and planting 1 to 2 inches apart. To prevent the plants from collapsing, suffocating and rotting, in some areas they were supported by bamboo racks, with hordes of peasants, day and night, fanning the fields with reed mats and paddling water to and fro. Some ingenious *kanpu*¹ got medals by having several acres of crop replanted on one acre, and then beating gongs and drums to

1. Chinese word for "cadre"—personnel in charge of training.

†Valentin Chu, *Ta Ta, Tan Tan: The Inside Story of Communist China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963).

announce a record crop. The greatest innovator in agriculture was a South China *kanpu*, who had twelve times the normal amount of seed sown in an acre, then erected a layer of boards atop the field, put several feet of soil on the boards, and sowed more upstairs. For air and light beneath the boards, he strung light bulbs and requisitioned electric fans to blow at the crop. He drafted 6,000 peasants, students, and shopkeepers for the job. Result: no harvest.

In 1961 a great innovation—a detachable precision lathe—was noisily exhibited in Peking. This lathe was invented in a Harbin factory proud of its “four withouts”—without large building, without large lathe, without large crane and without engineer. Over the opposition of engineers who called the lathe “difficult, impossible, unreasonable,” the Party ordered its production. The *kanpu* in a village near Tientsin kept fishermen from fishing during the season to make a giant net 35 by 26,000 feet, weighing 36,300 pounds. Costing 14,132 man-days, the net was so clumsy that by the time it was hauled up most of the fish had escaped. The result: seven trips by 72 trawlers netted a grand total of 2,265 pounds of fish.

The Great Leap was mixed with another metaphor: “Walking on two legs,” which means modern and primitive methods must be used side by side. Along with indigenous steel, indigenous cement, indigenous ball-bearings, there were indigenous precision machine lathes, made of cast iron, wrought iron, cement, or wood. The Tsaidam oil fields had indigenous pipes, indigenous tanks and even indigenous drill-heads—1,000 of them.

Chinese meteorologists formerly used

Western methods. In 1952 they switched to Russian methods. In 1958 they were ordered to incorporate indigenous methods. Youths trained for a few weeks were sent to local weather posts to supplement regular weather reports with peasant weather lore and “indigenous living meteorological instruments”—89 kinds of animals and plants sensitive to weather change. Thus, if leeches stay at the bottom of the jar, water-snails float on the surface, or gunpowder is not damp, it will be fine weather. One writer in the *Science Journal*, pointing out the undesirable results in previous rain-making experiments, suggested indigenous methods. The suggestion was probably facetious, as the only indigenous rain-making known in China is burning incense and kowtowing to the Dragon God.²

To conserve materials, bus drivers were told to emulate a man in Canton who saved fuel by always coasting downhill. Truckers were ordered to get 106,000 miles out of every tire, and 16 miles out of every gallon of gasoline, as was done by Chungking truck driver Chang Lien-shen. Chang, explained the *People's Daily*, achieved this by trying always to use the cruising speed and never the brakes, and by stopping every 20 miles to cool off the tires and pick pebbles out of the treads.

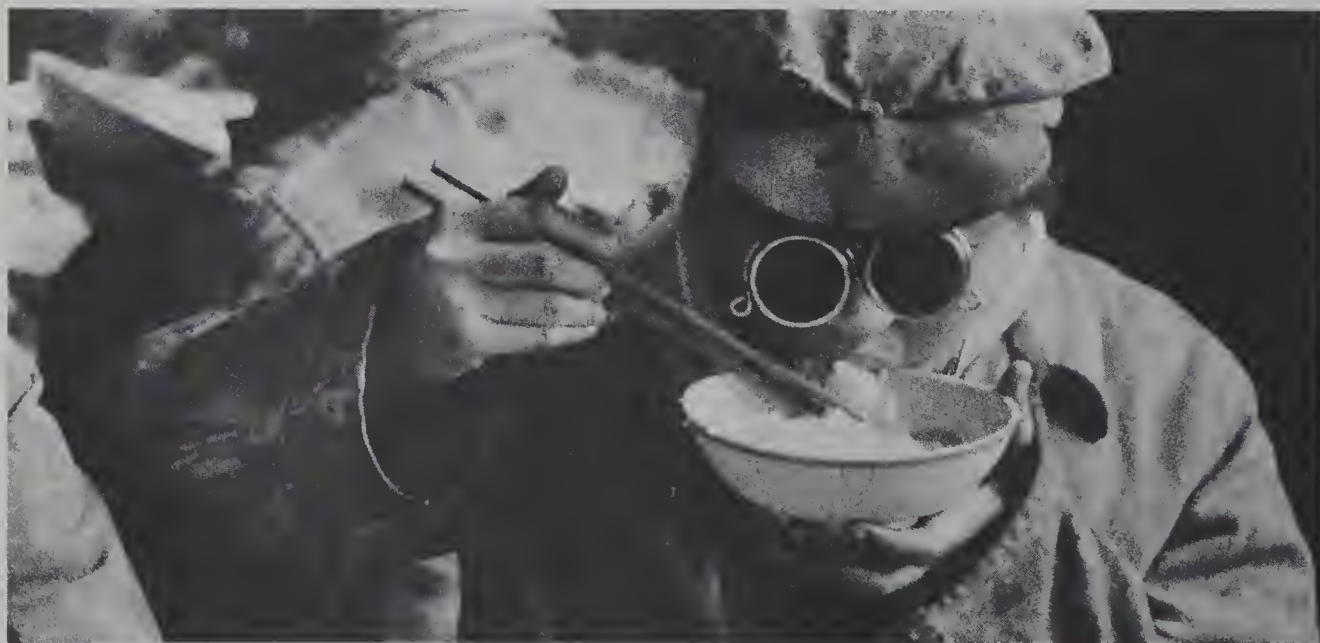
Claiming that fish can live in all kinds of water—fresh, running, stagnant, and even factory tank water for cooling engines—the Ministry of Aquatic Products boasted that by 1962 Communist China would be top in world fisheries. So a craze for fishponds was touched off. In Honan, after the people were made to

2. In old China, the dragon was a kingly emblem and was thought of as a god.

scoop up 300 million fish eggs from the rivers, the target of 5 million fish was instantly changed to 10 million. Dropping 300,000 fingerlings into the Shinsanling Reservoir near Peking, the party predicted that a year hence the fish would be two pounds apiece and the nation would be 600,000 pounds richer in fresh fish production. A public-health campaign began in 1956 to eliminate the "four pests"—flies, mosquitoes, rats, and sparrows. To fulfill quotas of the kill, people handed in dried turnip tips as rat tails, children scooped larvae from cesspools and washed them in basins, and hawkers peddled dead flies and mosquitoes in the street. Restaurants in Canton demanded that customers swat a certain number of flies before they could be served. The waiters counted the dead flies on customers' tables, then brought out bowls and chopsticks without washing their hands.

In construction work, a favorite practice was "production and planning progressing

side by side." The luxurious New Peking Hotel which has impressed many foreign visitors was badly planned. Steel bars used in the construction were so closely spaced that crushed stone in the concrete could not be poured through. The forty rooms in the Western Suburbs Hostel in that city were so designed that there was no place for a single bed. Finally the horizontal heating pipes were relocated vertically to make room for beds. A Peking opera theatre was built in the hostel, but there was no doorway big enough for stage props, so a huge hole was knocked out in a wall and stage props moved through the dining hall. During the construction of a handsome government dormitory, eleven doors had to be filled up and reinforcing pillars added to buttress the heavy horizontal steel beams, which were originally supported by flimsy brick columns. Most of the 5,000 units of housing built for Anshan workers collapsed after a heavy rain.



Through ingenuity, determination and discipline, the Chinese have recently developed the beginnings of an industrial economy. This young woman worker earns \$34 a month and sleeps in barracks near the factory.

Life in Peking: Report from a Long Nose

Jean-Louis Vincent, a French journalist, describes in this reading the events of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. It was to Peking that young people from all over China flocked to become part of the Red Guard. In Peking foreign journalists were abused by mobs, the mayor was deposed, and many other dramatic events took place.

Ten years ago, in the streets of Peking, European-looking foreigners were greeted with a warm welcome. Chinese children took it for granted that a European in People's China had to be a Soviet expert. Therefore, upon seeing a British diplomat, a West German businessman or a French journalist, some child would cry excitedly: "A Soviet man," and almost immediately hundreds of people would gather, smile, shake hands and say something which sounds like "knee-how" and means "good day." This automatic reaction went on, amazingly, well after the Sino-Soviet quarrel was already in full swing. The children still shout "Soviet man" when a Long Nose appears. And a crowd still gathers. Only now, smiles have been replaced by boos, by angry banging on the foreigner's car and by showers of abuse, which includes heavy spitting.

The Chinese demonstrator knows how to temper fury with discipline. Verbally, he commits the greatest excesses, but, in

fact, he keeps his calm. To see him scream, shake fists that come within an inch of the chin of the adversary but never strike—never crossing the invisible limit of his instructions—is to understand that nothing which has not been planned will happen. If the unthinkable should come to pass, it would not be by chance—it would not be by error.

The demonstrators have come in two waves. The first comprised the Red Guards, who flocked to Peking between last August and November.¹ The Red Guard was a youngster. Usually dressed in blue like nearly everyone else, occasionally in khaki, he was 12 to 22 years old. He could be recognized by his red armband on which flashed the three yellow characters *Hung Wei Ping* (Red Guard).

"Revolutionary rebel" workers make up the second group. The revolutionary rebel is generally an adult. He, too, can be recognized by his armband. (Practically

1. August and November, 1966.

† Jean-Louis Vincent, "Life in Peking: Report from a Long Nose" *New York Times* (February 26, 1967).

everyone on the streets of Peking wears an armband of one sort or another.) He is a workman or civil servant; since December, revolutionary rebel groups have been formed in all the Peking factories, in all the Government ministries, at the railway station, airport, hotels, stores and other establishments.

Like the Red Guards, the revolutionary rebels are commanded by group chiefs. These can be readily recognized during the demonstrations because each carries a piece of paper on which are written the slogans that they read out and that everyone repeats.

The precise organization of either the Red Guards or the revolutionary rebels remains something of a mystery. On Aug. 18, foreigners in Peking saw about two million young people leave for Tien An Men Square, without knowing what they were going to see, without being able to go themselves and without the slightest rumor having filtered out on what this first mass meeting of the Cultural Revolution was about. The same was true of the subsequent rallies.

The impression, however, is that in both the revolutionary rebels and the Red Guards, an organic structure parallel to that of the Communist party is in action. That so secret an organization can function with such precision and efficiency suggests that—in Peking, at least—the Cultural Revolution and its sequels never triggered an opposition dangerous to the regime.

Officially, of course, the purpose of the Cultural Revolution has been to unmask, depose and humiliate a group of leaders of the Communist party who had adopted the “capitalist way,” and who thus, in a China

that intends to remain pure, risked planting the cursed seeds of “modern revisionism.” With them were condemned a group of Peking intellectuals labeled the “black band.”

In addition, since the founding of the Red Guard, a second group of villains has been identified. They are labeled the “handful of obstinates applying the bourgeois reactionary line opposed to the proletarian line of Chairman Mao Tse-tung.” It is against this handful that the “revolutionary rebels” of industry and the countryside near the large cities are now fighting. According to the hundreds of thousands of posters that garnish the walls of Peking, its principal leaders are the President of the Republic, Liu Shao-chi, and the Secretary General of the Communist party, Teng Hsiao-ping. Hundreds of other responsible officials have been publicly disgraced simply for having carried out the orders of these two. The posters defaming them must lead the Chinese man in the street to distrust everyone—perhaps even himself.

During the Red Guard phase of the Cultural Revolution, posters were put up by youths who could be seen going about the streets at night with cans of paint and large strips of paper.

Later, there appeared slogans in giant characters which represented more brutal and brief attacks against the principal leaders. These slogans were also put up by youths, or sometimes painted on the street itself.

For Mao's purposes, the poster attacks are preferable to the use of the official press and radio because they correspond to the “mass line” of his ideology. Obviously, the movement is highly organized

and controlled, but it is also evident that Mao believes the workers and peasants should sometimes be allowed to take some initiatives. Thus, if criticism of Liu, for example, were broadcast by the official radio or published in the newspapers, the whole thing would be over; the workers and peasants would simply say “yes.” But because the radio and press say nothing, the masses—workers, peasants, students and every sort of revolutionary rebel and Red Guard—have the appearance of carrying on their own attacks against the leaders of the bourgeois reactionary line. It is a method that serves to demonstrate to the Chinese that the movement stems from the bottom upward.

Not only officials have been victims of the Cultural Revolution. Consider, for example, the strange case of Shih Chuang-hsiang, the elite night-soil collector.² His is a trade held in esteem in China because it provides a precious natural fertilizer. In addition, Shih was one of the stars of Chinese propaganda for many years. He represented a Peking district in the National Congress. Even after the disgrace of Mayor Peng, Shih’s star continued to shine. The official press continued to carry his bylined articles striking out at “black band” intellectuals. (They had, he complained, opposed the filming of a movie on the life of night-soil collectors for which he had written the scenario.) In September, still in favor with the regime, he undertook to teach Red Guards visiting Peking how to become elite night-soil collectors, and the official news agency Hsinhua published a lyrical dispatch demonstrating that if at least one man could be proud of his good work and excellent ideological orienta-

tion, that man was Shih Chuang-hsiang.

Suddenly, on January 15, the elite night-soil collector became an accursed night-soil collector. To the howls of a crowd that saw a prisoner pass every 10 minutes or so, he was driven in a truck through Peking, his head bowed, ridiculously rigged out with a large paper hat and a sign detailing the nature of his revisionist crimes: he had decorated his room with a photograph of himself in the company of Liu Shao-chi instead of with a portrait of Chairman Mao, and, as a parliamentary representative from Peking, he had had culpable dealings with Mayor Peng.

The technique is one that was set out in Mao’s 1927 report on the peasant movement in Hunan Province. It is noteworthy that instructions were issued last fall indicating that this report should be studied and its lessons applied. Concerning paper hats and placards of shame, Mao wrote—in reference to the landlords and other defenders of feudalism 30 years ago:

“This sort of thing is very common. A tall paper hat is stuck on the head of one of the local tyrants or evil gentry. . . . He is led by a rope and escorted with big crowds in front and behind. Sometimes brass gongs are beaten and flags waved to attract people’s attention. This form of punishment, more than any other, makes the local tyrant and evil gentry tremble. Anyone who has once been crowned with a tall paper hat loses face altogether and can never again hold up his head.”

He goes on: “One ingenious township peasant association arrested an obnoxious member of the gentry and announced that he was to be crowned that very day. The man turned blue with fear. Then the association decided not to crown him that

2. Night soil, or human waste, is collected daily to fertilize the fields.

day. They argued that if he were crowned right away he would become case-hardened and no longer afraid, and that it would be better to let him go home and crown him some other day. Not knowing when he would be crowned, the man was in daily suspense—unable to sit down or sleep at ease.”

In recent months, a semiofficial press—speaking in the name of the Red Guards and revolutionary workers—has made its appearance. Its target has been the bourgeois-reactionary “black wind of economism” symbolized by Liu and Teng. Their crime appears to have been to offer industrial workers the carrot of material stimulus: pay increases, yearly bonuses or other benefits. The “black wind” stands for the notion that China’s progress should be linked to the progress of industry. It would thus aggravate the contradiction between rural and urban society. In a country whose supreme leaders appear obsessed by such contradictions and by the hope of creating a new man who will be neither worker nor peasant, neither soldier nor intellectual, but all rolled into one, this is a grave sin.

Even before the Cultural Revolution was in full swing, China’s cities—not only Peking, but Shanghai and the industrial centers of Manchuria—were suspect and were downgraded in propaganda below the miracle-achievements of the model petroleum field of Taching or the brigade of Tachai. From those two units, born in the desert, where workers became peasants and peasants became workers, where the spirit of the “Great Leap Forward” still lives, the regime has decided that the China of tomorrow must emerge.

Thus, as part of the downgrading of

the cities, many posters put up in Peking have underlined the disparity between the incomes of the city workers and those of peasants. According to the revolutionary rebels, this difference can no longer be tolerated; all wages must be leveled to the lowest common denominator. A poster in the Peking station proposed salary reductions of 12 per cent to 60 per cent for railway employees. Similar posters appeared on some factory walls.

The visible effects of the Cultural Revolution on daily life are varied. Certainly, the principal stores are well-supplied with consumer goods. There are bicycles for \$40, radios from \$20 to \$120, television sets for \$200, overcoats and blue cotton raincoats for \$24. But the average wage for an industrial worker is not more than \$32 a month. In the city, incomes run about \$16 a month, and for the peasantry, something like \$40 to \$80 a year. But food, by Western standards, is incredibly inexpensive—and so plentiful that ration cards have long been abandoned.

Entertainment has disappeared. Museums are shut. Parks and zoos are open only intermittently. The city-dweller now appears to live for nothing but work, food and almost endless meetings and demonstrations.

After the end of the Peking Opera came the end of the modern theater, and the abolition of the popular folklore shows. One wonderful entertainer who disappeared was Ho Bao-lin, whose specialty had been the subtle mockery of sacred institutions. Masquerading as a star of the Peking Opera he would announce to his straight man that he was about to join the Institute of Irrigation. The straight man would express astonishment. “Why,” Ho

Bao-lin would say, “don’t you know that to become a great actor or a great orator you must know how to irrigate your vocal chords with *mao tai*?” *Mao tai*, besides echoing the chairman’s name, is a drink as colorless as gin and much stronger.

Movies have been closed, too, since late last summer, and even then there were only four being shown in all of China. Three were documentaries of Mao reviewing the mass demonstrations of Red Guards in Peking. The other was an hour-long documentary on China’s three nuclear explosions. Audiences read aloud in chorus the quotations from Mao flashed on the screen, and greeted each mushroom cloud with an incredible show of gaiety. The sound track of the film explains that atomic bombs are bombs like any others and that it is easy to escape them by knowing how to take the proper precautions. As if to confirm this point of view, the final scene shows a hen, which had been left in a cage not far from the blast, laying a beautiful egg among the flowers blooming under the immaculate sky of Sinkiang. Thus ends the first optimistic movie ever made about the atomic bomb—its message exactly the opposite of that of Nevil Shute in “On the Beach.”

The giants of Western culture—Shakespeare, Beethoven, Molière—all once adopted by China—have been dismissed as “revisionist squids.” In a speech in November, Mao’s wife, Chiang Ching—speaking in her role as the director of the cultural department of the Army of Liberation, roundly condemned cubism, Fauvism, Impressionism, jazz and all modern Western art movements. All dissemination, production or presentation of foreign musical, theatrical and literary

works has ended. Indeed, all artistic creation seems suspended.

In the major bookstores of Peking there are no Chinese-language works but those of Mao, a few translations of Marx, Engels and Lenin, a few Albanian political studies, and a history of the Indonesian Communist party.

In effect, nothing is read in China but the works, or excerpts of the works, of Mao. Everywhere, people carry copies of the famous little red book of quotations, “The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung,” that was made up by Lin Piao³ several years ago for the soldiers of the Liberation Army. They read the book in chorus, in the street, seated on the curbstone, on buses, trains and planes.

It is well to learn quotations of Mao Tse-tung by heart. They are the contemporary version of Chinese universality; they have an answer to everything. Everyone wears one at his buttonhole, inscribed on a small brooch. There is one hung on the handlebars of every bicycle, on cars, and naturally all the walls are loaded with them.

The new China is symbolized by the appearance of a semiofficial highly sensational press. It carries such headlines as “The 12 Great Crimes of President Liu Shao-chi,” or “The Secretary General of the Party Is a Big Poisonous Plant.” It prints such stories as an interview with President Liu’s son and daughter accusing their father—China’s head of state—of stealing funds from the party to maintain his wife in bourgeois splendor and buy himself such luxuries as a gold shoehorn.

The impact of this sensationalism cannot be grasped by anyone who has not seen

3. High-ranking Chinese Communist military leader.

Chinese crowds struggling to buy the Red Guard or revolutionary-rebel papers containing such stories. They stand on the curb to read at once the latest scandal, the first since the proclamation of the People's Republic 17 years ago.

Then, as the loudspeakers at every corner roll out the strains of "The Red Orient" or "Navigation on the High Seas

Depends on the Pilot," the crowd watches the carts of the condemned roll past or reads the posters relating the misdeeds and the crimes, ever more bloody and unbelievable, of the "black band."

But what is the impact on the masses? Where is China headed? How is the Westerner—diplomat or correspondent—to distinguish the true from the false?



In planes and trains, it is common to see a smiling hostess chant a song to the glory of Mao or a passenger read aloud from The Thought of Mao Tse-tung.

Conclusions

1. What do you consider to be the greatest challenges facing the People's Republic of China today? Comment on Chinese responses to those challenges and make your own recommendations.
2. Does the economic level of a country determine what kind of government is best able to meet the needs of that country? Do you think different nations should have different forms of government? Give your reasons.
3. Compare the relationship of the family to your government with the relationship of the Chinese family to the government of Communist China.
4. Compare city life to rural life in China and compare both to life in the United States.

Suggested Readings

Cameron, Nigel, and Brake, Brian. *Peking: A Tale of Three Cities*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965.

Presents ancient Peking and Peking of the Ming period chiefly through photographs of their art and descriptions of the life of the times. History and description of modern Peking are supplemented by many photographs.

Fessler, Loren, ed., et al. *China* (Life World Library), New York: Time Incorporated, 1963.

Discusses and illustrates historical and cultural traditions as well as developments in modern China.

Mackerras, Colin, and Hunter, Neale. *China Observed*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1968.

Two young Australians who speak Chinese and who taught English in China for two years describe events in China during the Cultural Revolution. Includes descriptions of "struggle" meetings, Red Guard activities, and student life.

Myrdal, Jan, and Kessle, Gun. *Chinese Journey*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1965.

Myrdal presents brief vignettes of life in China with many photographs by Gun Kessle from their extensive travel in China during 1962 and 1963.

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